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Major, Bruton discuss ways to revive ceasefire

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister John Major and his Irish counterpart John Bruton held a "friendly and constructive" telephone conversation on how to restore the IRA ceasefire following a massive London car bomb blast, Downing Street said Sunday. During a 20-minute conversation the two men agreed that the priority was to halt the violence immediately and reinstate the Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire, a spokesman said. The organisation unilaterally ended its 17-month truce on Friday, detonating a massive car bomb in eastern London which killed two people and wounded more than 100 others. The IRA claimed responsibility for the blast Saturday. The two leaders plan to meet this month, and their aides were in contact to fix a date, the Downing Street official added (see story on page 12).

Mubarak, Afeworki discuss Hanish dispute

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met his Eritrean counterpart Issaias Afeworki on Sunday in a bid to bring Eritrea and Yemen into direct talks to end their dispute over a Red Sea island, officials said. The two leaders discussed "efforts to remove points which block a meeting between the two sides and their viewpoints on ways of negotiating," Information Minister Safwat Al Sherif said, quoted by the state news agency MENA. Mr. Mubarak "is continuing his efforts and contacts with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to bring together the viewpoints and achieve progress on the proposed paths," Mr. Sherif said. Paris, which is mediating in the dispute, has proposed holding talks in France between the two sides on a draft accord to ease their conflict, according to Egyptian foreign ministry sources. In December Eritrean troops captured Hanish Al Kabir, part of an archipelago at the mouth to the Red Sea guarding access to busy shipping lanes and claimed by both Asmara and Sanaa. Mr. Mubarak returned earlier Sunday from Saudi Arabia where he discussed the armed stand-off in the Red Sea with Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, the acting Saudi ruler.

King Hussein performs Umra pilgrimage

King Hussein, Prince Abdullah review Jordanian-Saudi ties

MECCA (Agencies) — Jordanian and Saudi leaders, led by His Majesty King Hussein and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz, started official talks here Sunday.

After performing the umra, the King received at his residence in the holy city Crown Prince Abdullah accompanied by Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation Prince Sultan Ibn Abzul Aziz.

The King and the two Saudi leaders later left for Prince Abdullah Palace for official Jordanian-Saudi talks.

King Hussein accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and a high level delegation arrived in Jeddah Sunday on a two-day visit that he started by performing the umra, the lesser pilgrimage in Mecca and praying at the Holy Kaaba.

Performing the umra with the King were members of the Royal family and the Jordanian delegation accompanying him, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

During the visit, the King and the Jordanian delegation are expected to visit the mosque and the tomb of the Prophet Mohammad in Medina.

King Hussein greeted upon arrival in Jeddah by Prince Majed Ibn Abdul Aziz, the governor of Mecca, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal and other leading Saudi officials.

King Hussein is accompanied on the visit by Their Royal Highnesses Princes Abdullah, Faisal and Hamzeh as well as Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, the chief chamberlain. Their Royal Highnesses Princes Talal and Ghazi, Prince Firas Ben Ra'd and other Royal family members.

Also accompanying the King are Mr. Kabariti, speakers of the Senate and the Lower House of Parliament Ahmad Lawzi and Sa'd Hayel Srour, Chief of the Royal Court Awn Khasawneh, King Hussein's advisor on religious affairs and other senior officials and members of the Senate and the Lower House as well as representatives of the media.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent before the King's departure on the two-day trip.

Upon leaving Amman King Hussein expressed hope that his visit and his efforts will result in success of reestablishing solidarity among Arab countries.

"Our relations with Saudi Arabia are normal and I hope this visit will further strengthen bilateral ties in the interest of both countries," the King said.

"Meetings among brothers and the resumption of dialogue among leaders are bound to enhance cooperation among Arab states," he said.

Following the visit to Saudi Arabia and the performance of the umra the King plans to visit Egypt later this week.

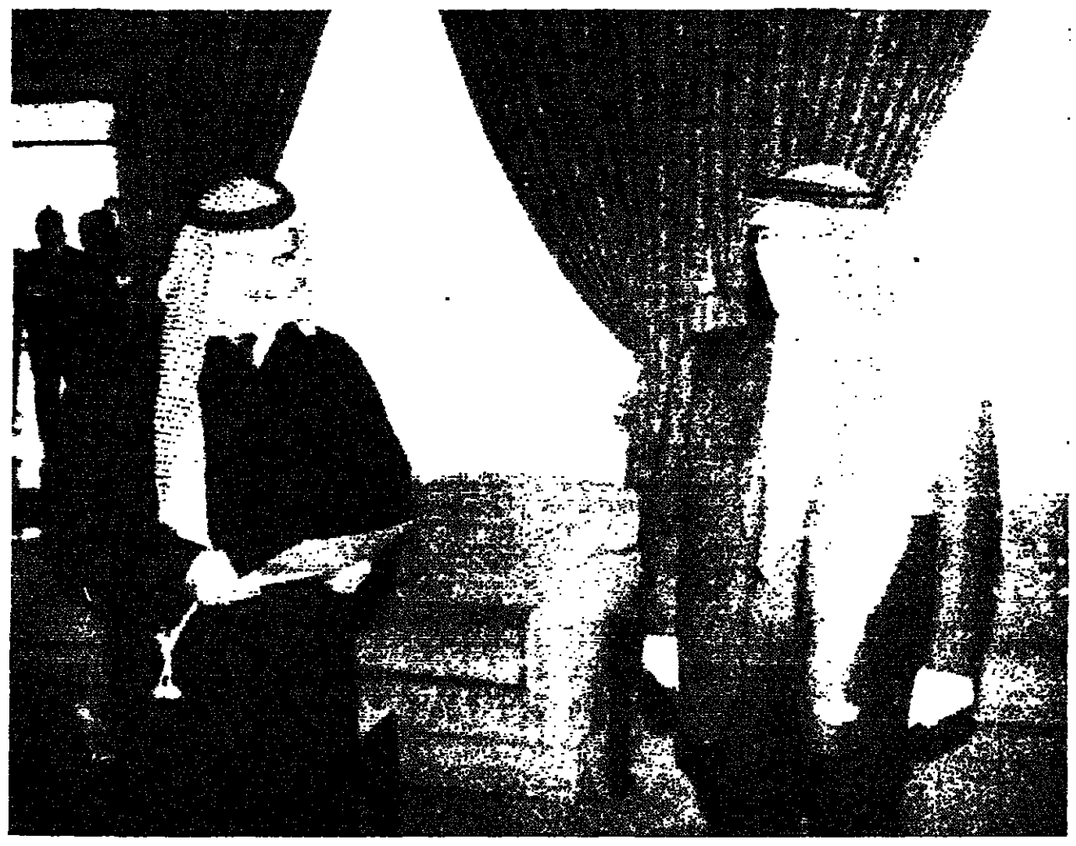
King Hussein visited Saudi Arabia in 1994 to perform umra, but did not see Saudi officials then. He was to meet with King Fahd in December, but the much-heralded meeting was postponed after the Saudi monarch fell sick.

King Fahd, according to U.S. sources, suffered a stroke in November. On new year's day, he put his brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, in charge of the government, saying he needed to rest.

The king, in his early 70s and known to have a history of health problems, has since Jan. 1 been shown on Saudi television meeting with royal family members.

Amman and Riyadh fell out five years ago, when the traditionally pro-Western Jordan refused to join a U.S.-led coalition force which drove Iraq out of Kuwait in February 1991.

That, together with overwhelming sympathies for Iraq among ordinary Jordanians, painted the Kingdom as, pro-Iraqi.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan is sworn in as Regent prior to His Majesty King Hussein's departure to Saudi Arabia where he held talks on Jordanian-Saudi relations and performed Al Umra pilgrimage (Petra photo)

Mandela to invite Qadhafi

ROBBEN ISLAND, South Africa (R) — President Nelson Mandela said on Sunday he was determined to invite Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi to visit South Africa in defiance of any pressure est. "I invited (Cuban President) Fidel Castro, he was supposed to come in August last year but he asked for a postponement," Mr. Mandela said in a television interview marking the sixth anniversary of his release from jail. "I am determined to have him (Castro) in this country. I am determined to invite Colonel (Muammar) Qadhafi. Those are our friends who were with us when we were all alone... "I'm not going to take advice as to who my friends should be. Fidel Castro, the doors are open to him to come to this country. Colonel Qadhafi is exactly in the same position," Mr. Mandela said.

Alleged informer killed in southern Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Two suspected Islamic militants shot and killed a farmer they believed was a police informer on his farm in a southern Egyptian village, police said Sunday. The two men fled after gunning down Nagi Ahmed on Saturday near the extremists hotbed of Abu Qurqas, 220 kilometres south of Cairo. Police would not comment on whether Mr. Ahmed had any connection with them. In the same area Friday, militants fired on a church, killing its two guards and a bystander and wounding three other people. The shootings occurred in the Holy Month of Ramadan, one of four months when Muslims believe God forbids violence.

Iranian Bahai gets death sentence

PARIS (R) — An Islamic revolutionary court in Iran has sentenced to death a 49-year-old Bahai for apostasy, returning to his original faith after converting to Islam, the French branch of the Bahai faith said on Sunday. Dhabihu'llah Mahrami, an agriculture department employee in Yazd province, will also have all his possessions confiscated according to the court's ruling handed down in the past few days, a Bahai spokeswoman said. Mr. Mahrami, born a Bahai, was accused of converting to Islam in 1981 to avoid being fired from his government job but returend to the Bahai faith seven years later, according to translations of court documents provided by the French Bahais.

Peres announces early elections

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres announced early general elections on Sunday in hopes of riding his current wave of popularity into another four years in office.

Bolstered by the success of the peace process and holding a commanding lead over his conservative rival in opinion polls, Mr. Peres said he had decided to hold the elections at the earliest date possible.

"I hesitated a lot recently. That's finished, and I have decided to hold the elections early," Mr. Peres said during a press conference broadcast live on Israeli television and radio.

Mr. Peres said that stability had returned to Israel after it was rocked by the assassination of his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, at the hands of a Jewish law student on Nov. 4.

"When I saw that Yitzhak Rabin had passed away, I saw on his face a complete serenity, and I told myself that my duty was to prevent the country from being paralysed," Mr. Peres said. "I therefore pushed off the idea of early elections."

"But today, I think, the period of stabilisation (after the murder) is over," he added.

Mr. Peres did not announce a time for the elections, but Labour leaders believe May 28 is the most likely date, with May 21 and June 3 also being mentioned. They were scheduled for Oct. 29.

The exact date is to be decided in the next few days during negotiations with various political parties in Israel.

Opinion polls published last week put Mr. Peres 10 points ahead of the leader of the main rightwing opposition Likud Party, Benjamin Netanyahu.

By going to the country early, Mr. Peres hopes to boost his slim coalition majority to reach a comfortable platform from which to continue the Arab-Israeli peace process.

"I need to renew the mandate of the government and the prime minister to serve the people," Mr. Peres said.

Asked whether he was taking advantage of the sympathy vote caused by Mr. Rabin's assassination Mr. Peres responded: "I am not responsible for the situation created by the murder."

He also said it was also necessary to lift the uncertainty caused by the Israeli elections to enhance the chances of the current peace negotiations with Syria.

Those talks have stumbled over the thorny issue of handing back the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

Mr. Peres also defended the record of his ruling Labour Party since it came to power in 1992, underlining Israel's economic growth and the success of the peace process with the Palestinians.

Mr. Netanyahu is still trailing badly even though Likud and the extreme rightwing party Tzomet last week signed a pact to run a joint slate of candidates.

The rightwing has plummeted in the polls since the murder of Mr. Rabin by a Jewish fanatic opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy accords.

Likud was criticised for provoking a vicious climate of hate around Mr. Rabin by launching constant verbal attacks before he was gunned down.

Labour's Secretary General Nissim Zvili has advocated actively drawing on the "Rabin-effect" and has asked his widow, Leah Rabin, who in the days following the assassination came to represent a nation in mourning, to campaign for a Labour victory.

Campaigning can only start once parliament has agreed to dissolve. Mr. Peres completed a formality holding early parliamentary elections by meeting with President Ezer Weizan earlier Sunday, officials said.

5, out of 36, detained in Israel will be freed soon

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Five Jordanian detainees in Israeli prisons will be released in the next few days, Minister of Public Works and Housing and Acting Defence Minister Abdul Hadi Majali said on Sunday.

Mr. Majali said at the regular Lower House of Parliament session Sunday morning that 36 Jordanians held in Israeli jails will be released in groups and that the government will update the House on all developments in this regard.

"The first batch of five people will be released within days," Mr. Majali said. "There are also talks over the remaining prisoners, especially those who are categorised as having been involved in the killing of Israelis."

"We hope we can reach an agreement (with the Israelis) over the last category. The government will do all it can and promise the House to keep it updated with all developments," he added.

The minister was replying to a complaint filed by Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Bassam Emoush from Zarqa. Dr. Emoush demanded the government to provide the House with the full names of Jordanian detainees in Israeli prisons. He also criticised an answer by Abdul Karim Kabariti, then foreign minister, to a previous question on the same issue.

"It is very strange that his excellency (Mr. Kabariti) would say that most of the detainees did not take part in terrorist acts ... this means that some of them had committed terrorist acts. Our throats went sour explaining that terrorism is one thing and resisting the occupant and the aggressor is something else," Dr. Emoush said.

"And if terrorism applies to anyone it is first and foremost applicable to the massacres of Deir Yasin and Kufr Qasem. We have all seen on TV how Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Sharaa held a picture of (former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Shamir with the word 'wanted' underneath."

"We hope we will hear of their (the Jordanian prisoners) return soon," added Dr. Emoush.

Dr. Emoush also called on the government to release detainees in Jordanian prisons, who he said were never charged.

"I hope the minister of interior, Awad Khleifat, would intervene and order the release of these people before the Al Fitr feast, in nine days time)," he said.

Dr. Khleifat responded by saying that the Ministry of Interior would form a committee to look into the cases of these prisoners and "God willing, the right decision will soon be taken."

Journalists targetted:

17 killed, 87 injured in two car bombs in Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Two powerful car bombs rocked the centre of Algiers on Sunday, killing at least 17, injuring a total of 87 people, and badly damaging the headquarters of several independent newspapers.

The second blast which targetted the newspaper building injured 52, as well as killing 17, according to official figures, making it the second deadliest attack in Algiers in some four years of clashes between security forces and armed Islamic groups.

Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia went to the scene, hitting out at "an act of barbarity totally foreign" to Algerian society, the APS news agency reported.

It was not immediately clear how many journalists, who are a prime target for these groups, were among the victims.

One journalist said "at least two people from (evening newspaper) Le Soir are dead."

Sunday's second explosion occurred at around 3:15 p.m. (1415 GMT) near the former barracks known as "La Maison de la Presse" in the heavily populated area of Belcourt.

A first blast which took place around 9:05 a.m. (0805 GMT) at the city hall in the densely populated Bab Al Oued district of the capital injured 35 people, according to the latest tall. Earlier officials said 41 had been hurt.

According to an AFP correspondent, the second blast destroyed the headquarters of Le Soir d'Algerie, and damaged offices of several other private newspapers, which had been under heavy police guard.

A journalist, surrounded by rubble, told AFP: "It is terrible, it is like an earthquake, we all dreaded carnage like that would happen one day."

Rescue workers were ploughing through the debris in a desperate search for survivors, while others tried to tend to wounded as they lay in the wreckage.

A dozen cars caught fire in the blast, and strips of burned flesh were visible on barely recognisable shells of vehicles.

Scenes of panic ensued as the power of the blast blew out windows of buildings opposite the newspaper headquarters, and flying glass injured passersby.

One witness said that the car containing the bomb had been abandoned against the wall of the newspaper headquarters by several men who ran away.

Another said the attack resembled one that targetted the central police headquarters on Jan. 30, 1995.

Forty-two people were then killed and nearly 300 wounded, most of them passersby, in the suicide attack carried out by the armed Islamic group, the most extreme of the Islamic groups fighting the Algerian regime.

Sunday's double attack coincides with an upsurge in violence since the beginning of Ramadan on Jan. 21, which armed Islamic groups consider is propitious to Jihad or holy war.

Armed Islamic groups have accused independent newspapers of collaborating with the government, and a total of 48 journalists have been killed in two and a half years. On Saturday, a journalist from a weekly publication of the central union UGTA was shot dead.

In less than a month, 12 car bombs or other types of explosion have killed at least 57 and injured more than 200, according to figures from emergency services and the press.

Prime Minister Ouyahia pledged: "The Algerian state, in communion with the people, will go out of its way to eliminate this babarism from the land of Algeria."

Authorities have said attacks such as Sunday's are designed to mask the failure of the armed groups, which have suffered heavy casualties and were abandoned by the electorate in November elections which overwhelmingly reelected President Liamine Zeroual.

Violence erupted in Algeria in January 1992, following the cancellation of a second round of elections which the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win. Clashes have since claimed between 30,000 and 50,000 lives, according to non-official estimates.

Businessmen hold trade talks in Baghdad

AMMAN (AP) — A group of 27 industrialists is in Baghdad discussing commercial cooperation three weeks after Jordan halved exports to Iraq, a trade official said Sunday.

Ali Dajani, an advisor at the Amman Chamber of Industry, said the team is meeting with senior Iraqi officials to "assess trade relations between the two countries."

The team, which arrived in Baghdad Friday, "will also participate in the biannual meeting of the joint industrial committee formed last year," Mr. Dajani told the Associated Press.

He stressed that Jordan's Jan. 23 decision to halve its exports to its eastern neighbour to $220 million this year is not on the delegation's agenda in Baghdad.

But the official Iraqi news agency, monitored in Cyprus, reported that the delegation met Sunday with Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammed Mehdi Saleh, who told them: "The Iraqi market is open to Jordanian economic activity.

"There is no obstacle, be it administrative or technical, to impede the flow of goods from Jordan to Iraq," he said, underlining Baghdad's efforts to prevent any severing of trade links with Jordan.

The government has said the decision to reduce trade with Baghdad was made because Iraq's debt to Jordan was too high at $1.2 billion.

The move followed political strains prompted by government criticism of the Iraqi leadership.

Government officials said under the new trade terms, Jordan will continue to send Iraq food and medical supplies exempt from U.N. sanctions, imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, in return for Iraqi oil.

Iraq supplies Jordan with all its daily needs of 75,000 barrels of crude and fuel oil with the tacit approval of the U.N. Security Council.

Bomb in Bahrain hotel wounds three

MANAMA (Agencies) — A home-made bomb exploded in a major hotel of the Bahraini capital on Sunday, wounding three guests, in the second such attack within a month, officials said.

The bomb shattered windows in the Diplomat hotel, but the wounded were not in serious condition, the officials said. The hotel's 100 guests were evacuated and police cordoned off the building.

"The explosion (at the Diplomat hotel) was caused by a home-made bomb," one official told Reuters, adding the bomb slightly wounded three people when it exploded next to the door of the hotel.

The official said more details would be released as they became available. The Diplomat hotel lies in a district of Manama close to many foreign businesses and diplomatic missions.

A guest at the Diplomat hotel, Simon Paul, 37, of the Netherlands, said the explosion occurred in the street outside the lobby of the building in downtown Manama.

Newsmen in a nearby office block heard a deafening blast. Fire engines rushed to the scene.

A 42-year-old Indian businessman who was in the restaurant, just off the lobby, said the explosion was close to where he had been sitting.

"If I hadn't moved to the salad bar, I'd have had it," he told the Associated Press. He declined to give his name.

Guests streamed out of the hotel, crying and hugging each other.

The last explosion at a Manama hotel took place on Jan. 17 at Le Meridien during an international economic conference. Another home-made bomb, hidden in a basement toilet, caused no injuries.

PLO opposition figure will join final status talks

CAIRO (AFP) — The most senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official opposed to the peace accords with Israel said on Sunday he would participate in negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories.

"I will join final status negotiations, because the PLO's executive committee is responsible for directing these talks," Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's Political Department, told AFP in Cairo.

"Final status negotiations are an opportunity to consolidate national unity. I ask all Palestinian forces to participate and I will work for their attendance," Mr. Kaddoumi said.

Mr. Kaddoumi has frequently criticised the self-rule accords signed by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat with Israel and boycotted sessions of the PLO's executive council.

The Popular and the Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP and DFLP), both based in Syria, have also boycotted sessions of the committee to protest the accords.

Final status negotiations to begin in May will address the sensitive issues of Israel-occupied Arab East Jerusalem, Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the return of Palestinian refugees and the displaced.

Mr. Kaddoumi said he had refused to join in earlier stages of PLO-Israeli negotiations because "they treated only the superficialities of the Palestinian issue."

"The heart of the problem is the end of the Israeli occupation, the restoration of East Jerusalem, elimination of the settlements and the return of the refugees and displaced," he said.

"Up until now we have done nothing to solve these problems. We have reached no concrete results except the return of PLO members to the occupied territories," he said.

The term "refugees" refers to Palestinians who lost their land in the first Israeli-Arab war of 1948, while "displaced" covers those who fled the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Middle East war.

Mr. Kaddoumi said the PLO must "not submit to Israeli conditions" demanding that the organisation remove articles from its charter calling for the destruction of the Jewish state.

"Israel still has not implemented a basic article (of the self-rule accords) allowing the return of 750,000 displaced Palestinians. This provision is clear, but Israel refuses whatever it wants from the agreements," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has insisted Mr. Arafat fulfil commitments to drop the charter clauses within two months of the first meeting of the newly-elected Palestinian autonomy council. But Mr. Kaddoumi warned that altering the charter would "mean the elimination of the PLO and a division between Palestinians outside (the territories) and those inside."

"In the future, when a Palestinian state is created or a confederation with Jordan is established, we will respond to all the requirements of a political resolution of the Palestinian problem."

Mr. Kaddoumi said he would not return to the West Bank or Gaza until "the end of the Israeli occupation."

Protests in Bethlehem over Israeli construction

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AFP) — Palestinian officials in Bethlehem protested on Sunday the Israeli army's construction of a wall at the entrance to the biblical town, calling it a provocation.

Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij described the construction as "a criminal act perpetrated in a public place and reducing the width of the road to Bethlehem from 20 metres to six metres."

"This threatens tourism and further separates Bethlehem, as well as the southern West Bank, from Jerusalem and the northern part of the territory," he said.

The Israeli army has begun building a large cement wall which blocks half the main road coming from Jerusalem, slowing vehicle traffic since only one lane is now open.

The wall is being built around Rachel's Tomb, a site holy to Jews just outside Bethlehem.

The army is also planning to build a parking lot behind the holy site and an elevated sidewalk connecting the two.

"This construction is provocative and illegal," the Bethlehem municipality said in a statement, calling on Palestinians to join a protest at the centre of the town on Monday.

The municipality accused Israel of violating the West Bank autonomy accords signed Sept. 28, which turns Bethlehem and the access road over to Palestinian control.

According to witnesses, Palestinian police prevented the entry to Bethlehem of vehicles with Israeli license tags.

Palestinian sources said that the demonstration was to have taken place on Sunday but was delayed until Monday to prevent incidents between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Israeli army withdrew Dec. 20 from Bethlehem, ending a 28-year occupation.

Palestinian organ donor saves lives of four Israelis

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A Palestinian building worker killed in an accident saved the lives of four Israelis who received his organs in transplant operations, doctors said Sunday.

The heart, pancreas, liver and kidneys of the Palestinian from Nablus in the West Bank, were transplanted with his family's permission on Saturday, Dr. Yaakov Lavi of Shiva Hospital in Tel Aviv said.

The donor, 38, whose identity was not revealed, died after falling from a ladder while working on a construction site in Israel.

"All the members of the family agreed on condition that we got the green light from the eldest brother, who lives in the Gaza Strip," Dr. Lavi said.

"After several hours of intensive searching, we found him and immediately obtained a special pass from the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli military administration (for him to enter Israel).

"We explained the case to him at the hospital and he agreed," the doctor added.

The dead man's heart was given to an Israeli Arab, the liver to another patient, the pancreas and one of the kidneys to a third patient, while the other kidney was donated to a fourth Israeli.

"These organ donations will help cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority towards creating a Middle East organ exchange," Dr. Lavi said. "Previously, three Palestinians have undergone kidney and pancreas transplants in our hospital."

Israel gave the Palestinian Authority responsibility for health in the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1994.

Dr. Lavi said 700 Israeli patients were waiting for kidney transplants, a hundred for heart donors, 50 for pancreas and another 50 for liver transplants.

Israel has obtained some organ donations from Cyprus under an exchange agreement signed last year.

"That country provided us with a heart and we have two Cypriot patients waiting for heart transplants at the moment," said Dr. Lavi.

Libya sent home 335,000 foreigners in 1995

TUNIS (R) — Libya sent home some 335,000 foreigners in 1995, expelling most of them, the justice and public order minister said on Sunday.

"Two hundred thousand foreigners have been sent back home and an additional 135,000 left voluntarily, which makes a total of 335,000," said Mohamed Al Higazi in remarks broadcast on Libyan radio and television and monitored in Tunis.

Among them were 173 people infected with the HIV virus leading to AIDS and 195 people with other contagious diseases, he added.

He made the remarks to Libya's General People's Congress, meeting for its annual session in the coastal city of Sirte.

Mr. Higazi didn't give the breakdown by nationalities, but early reports said the communities worst affected were Palestinians, Egyptians, Sudanese, Somalis and Eritreans.

Libya last year announced it would make some 2.5 million foreign workers go home, citing negative effects that U.N. sanctions imposed on it since 1992 had been having on Libyan workers.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi also ordered the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians living in Libya last year, to make the point that the peace deal between the PLO and Israel gives no entrance or residence rights for many Palestinian exiles.

More than a million workers in Libya come from Egypt, with a large Palestinian community and groups from Algeria, Chad, Sudan, and Niger.

Shimon Peres dreams of winning his first election

TEL AVIV (R) — Shimon Peres has made history by hammering his visions of a new Middle East into peace deals.

Now after half a century in politics, the Israeli prime minister hopes to make a personal dream come true by winning his first general election in five tries.

The 72-year-old Peres has been riding a wave of popularity since Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in November.

But in a typically down-and-dirty Israeli campaign, he could have a hard time shaking off the tags of "loser" and "schemer" pinned on him by war-hardened Israelis.

Born in Poland, Mr. Peres arrived in British-run Palestine at age 11. Groomed for leadership by founding father David Ben-Gurion, he got his start overseeing arms purchases and manpower in the Hagana, the Zionist fighting force which became the Israeli army, before the Jewish state was founded in 1948.

Mr. Peres held every top cabinet job during his career. As foreign minister in 1994 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mr. Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for a breakthrough accord in 1993. He and Mr. Rabin also made peace with Jordan.

When an Israeli opposed to peace moves shot the 73-year-old Mr. Rabin dead at a Tel Aviv rally Nov. 4, the torch was passed to Mr. Peres who vowed to forge the peace with Syria, Lebanon and other Arab states that eluded his predecessor.

Opinion polls show him way ahead of the hardline Likud Party opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu but some analysts ascribe much of the support for Mr. Peres to sympathy for Mr. Rabin, his colleague in the Labour Party.

Mr. Peres was also popular in his first turn as prime minister from 1984 to 1986. He pulled Israeli troops back from Lebanon, normalised relations with Egypt and slashed inflation from 445 per cent a year to below 20 per cent.

But failed bids to win elections, weld coalitions and garner support for secret peace plans gave him the reputation of a loser.

He has a long history of flops on Israel's political stage. Four times — in 1977, 1981, 1984 and 1988 — he failed to win a national election outright. It was only under an unusual power-sharing arrangement with Likud that Mr. Peres did his first turn as prime minister.

In 1992 Rabin, his legendary rival, seized the Labour Party from Mr. Peres and led it to a decisive victory. But Mr. Rabin couldn't ignore Mr. Peres or his years of experience, grudgingly making him foreign minister.

Though an articulate if uninspiring speaker and a skilfull diplomat, Mr. Peres has long seemed out of place on Israel's political stage, his visions of a new and flourishing Middle East not taken seriously.

He appeared better suited to academia than politics, even publishing several books, including one on his vision of a new Middle East.

Tireless in his pursuit of peace and political success, Mr. Peres has said he averages three to four hours of sleep a night though he would like to have five. Vacations are simply not part of his culture, he said.

After Mr. Rabin's death, Mr. Peres reached out across the divide underscored by the assassination, urging Israelis for and against the government's peace moves to work with him to bring their society together.

He promised that despite peace deals with the Palestinians, his government would not ignore the "feeling of distress" among the 130,000 Jewish settlers of the occupied lands who had complained Mr. Rabin was abandoning them.

He had 15 years of experience in the defence ministry and was widely regarded as the man who gave Israel nuclear capabilities by procuring its secret Dimona reactor from France.

But some Israelis still feared he would lack the toughness of Mr. Rabin, a former army chief, to stand up to Israel's enemies and guard their security while making peace.

With an eye to boosting his government's security credentials, Mr. Peres made himself defence minister as had Mr. Rabin before him and appointed army-chief-turned-politician Ehud Barak his foreign minister.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres gestures as he announces early elections February 11. Peres said that elections would be held as early as the law allows (Reuters photo)

Peres aims to widen parliament majority

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres hopes an Israeli election will widen his razor-thin parliamentary majority so he can shore up complicated and historic peace moves.

His left-centre Labour Party heads a coalition with the leftist Meretz bloc and breakaways from hardline Tsomet. Backed from outside by two Arab-dominated parties, the government commands 63 votes in the 120-seat parliament to 51 for the rightist rival Likud Party and its allies.

The ultra-orthodox Jewish Shas Party, which briefly joined the government but has since left, holds the remaining six seats. It variously aligns with Labour or Likud or abstains in parliament votes.

The breakdown of parliamentary seats:

Labour and allies		Tsomet	5
Labour	44	Ataid	1
Meretz	12	Moledet	3
Tsomet breakaways	2	National Religions	6
Hadash	3	United Torah Judaism	4
Arab Democratic Party	2		
Total	63	Total	51
Likud and allies		**Swing vote**	
Likud	32	Shas	6

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 ..... Bonkers (cartoon)
14:30 ..... Richie Rich
15:00 ..... Playabout
15:15 ..... Bustin Loose
15:40 Doc. — Animals of the Mediterranean
16:10 ..... Okavango
17:00 ..... Magazine — Nimbus
17:20 Serie — Les Comagnons de L'Adventure
17:50 Magazine — C'Est Pas Sorcier
18:20 Family Programme — L'Ecole de Fans
19:00 ..... News in French
19:15 Magazine — Cinq Sur Cinq
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... McHale's Navy
20:00 ..... Invention
20:25 ..... Hawai Five — O
21:10 Doc. — The Missing Years
22:00 ..... News in English
22:25 Doc. — A Journey Across the Land of Islam
22:40 Drama — Perfect Scoundrels
23:10 ..... Drama — Taurus Rising
23:59 ..... Comedy — Ellen

PRAYER TIMES
04:59 ..... Fajr
06:18 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
11:50 ..... Dhuhr
14:55 ..... 'Asr
17:21 ..... Maghreb
18:40 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelleh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church. Tel: 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church In Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with skies partly cloudy and winds northwesterly moderate.

In Aqaba, it will be sunny with skies northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	5/12
Aqaba	11/22
Deserts	4/13
Jordan Valley	10/19

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 9, Aqaba 20. Humidity readings: Amman 93 per cent, Aqaba 27 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Dr. Yousef Al Faqih 790104
Dr. Jamal Jharah 847351
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Ascna pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Alquds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijjawi 985445
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police 192.	621111. 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity. J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity. J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas. J. Amman 636140
Palestine. Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian. Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafich 775111/26
Army. Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 686100
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990090

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital ..... (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..... (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital ..... (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532005, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
08:30 ..... Sanaa (RJ)
08:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
09:00 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:30 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 ..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 ..... Beirut (RJ)
13:30 ..... Wahran (add) (RJ)
16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:40 ..... Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
20:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
04:00 ..... Rome (AZ)
09:45 ..... Khartoum (SD)
09:50 ..... Cairo (MS)
12:40 .... Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:00 ..... Vienna (OS)
15:30 ..... Kiev (6U)
19:00 ..... Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:45 ..... Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:05 ..... London (BA)
01:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)
21:25 ..... Aqaba (RW)
22:25 ..... Aqaba (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
03:00 ..... Wahran (add) (RJ)
06:15 ..... Beirut (RJ)
11:00 ... Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
12:25 ..... Frankfurt, London (RJ)
14:30 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:15 ..... Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 ..... Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
05:00 ..... Rome (AZ)
06:00 ..... Istanbul (TK)
06:50 ..... Beirut, London (BA)
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
10:40 ..... Cairo (MS)
11:00 ..... Khartoum (SD)
13:30 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
15:50 ..... Vienna (OS)
16:30 ..... Kiev (6U)
00:40 ..... London (BA)
02:30 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 ..... Beirut, Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)
07:00 ..... Aqaba (RW)
08:00 ..... Aqaba (RW)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus
5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus
7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman
5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	600/600
Banana (Mukammar)	520/520
Banana (imported)	850/650
Cabbage	70 / 40
Carrot	180/100
Cauliflower	160/100
Cucumbers (large)	150/ 100
Cucumbers (small)	250 / 180
Eggplant	220/ 150
Garlic	1000/800
Grape Fruit	220/120
Lemon	370/250
Marrow (large)	140/ 100
Marrow (small)	200 / 130
Onion (green)	140/100
Onion (dry)	210/ 150
Orange	640/500
Pepper (hot)	500 / 400
Pepper (sweet)	500/400
Potato	200/150
Radish	160/90
String Beans	700 / 500
Spanich	140 / 100
Tomato	130/80

Queen attends Hudecek violin recital, hosts iftar for wives of officials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Sunday attended a recital by the acclaimed Czech violinist Vaclav Hudecek, who was accompanied by pianist Petr Adamec, at the Royal Cultural Centre, a Royal Court statement said.

The performance, which was organised by the National Music Conservatory and the Czech embassy, features sonatas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwing von Beethoven, Franz Shubert and Antonin Dvorak.

Mr. Hudecek, who is considered one of the best three contemporary violinists in the world, has performed with renowned international orchestras and various musical festivals around the globe.

Petr Adamec, who has performed with Mr. Hudecek since 1977, is an outstanding interpreter of chamber music compositions and an associate professor at Prague's Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

Her Majesty Queen Noor on Sunday welcomes wives of Cabinet ministers and government and Royal Court officials to an iftar she hosted at the Raghadan Palace

Also Sunday, Queen Noor hosted an iftar at Raghadan Palace for the wives of Cabinet ministers, government and Royal Court officials as well as members of the Royal Family. Senator Leila Sharaf and Advisor to the Queen In'am Mufti attended the iftar.

Defendants in two separate honour crimes get 3 months

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Sunday handed down prison sentences of three years each to two men in separate cases of honour killings.

In the first case, Ramzi A.D., who was initially charged with the premeditated murder of his 20-year-old sister Lina, received a six-month sentence. But the term was reduced to three months because his family dropped their charges against him.

According to court documents, Lina became pregnant out of wedlock, and when her family noted her condition seven months later, they decided to kill her.

On Sept. 24, the court said, Ramzi drove his sister from Marka to Ruseifeh and parked his car in a valley near a football field owned by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company.

Ramzi asked his sister to descend from the car, then struck her on the head with a rock, drew a knife and slashed her throat and stomach, court documents said.

In the second case, a 45-year-old man identified as Sami A., who was charged with the premeditated murder of his daughter, first received a six-month prison term which was also reduced to three months because the mother of the victim dropped charges against her husband.

Court documents said that the victim, Muna, had had a relationship with her neighbour who promised to marry her. Muna, who was 18-years-old and lived in Arda town near the Jordan Valley, became pregnant.

When Muna's parents found out about her pregnancy, the father confronted her.

"At first, Muna denied having an affair with her neighbour, but when she confessed, her father lost his temper and tried to strangle her with her own scarf, but when that did not work, he stabbed her to death," the document said.

In both the above cases the court amended the charges of premeditated murder to third degree murder because, it said, both defendants committed their crimes in a fit of fury to "cleanse their family honour."

Meanwhile, Prosecutor General Khalid Darwish told the Jordan Times Sunday that a list of accusations against Mohammad A., 43, detained in the shooting death of his two sisters, was forwarded to court and that a date for the trial will be announced soon.

According to Mr. Darwish, Mohammad, who confessed to the double murder of his sisters Kifaya, 23, and Nadia, 32, shot and killed both women on Dec. 30, after he found a strange man in their house.

Mohammad first shot his sister Nadia in the chest and went after Kifaya who smashed through the glass of the apartment window and jumped out, falling through an awning of a shop below, Mr. Darwish said.

"Mohammad appeared at the window and shot Kifaya five times then went back and shot his sister Nadia again in the head," he added.

Mr. Darwish said that the formal charge against Mohammad, who surrendered the day following the crime, is manslaughter.

Government pledges to expand base of food coupon beneficiaries

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The government on Sunday pledged to reconsider the food coupon system and, to expand the circle of its beneficiaries. Replying to complaints by Lower House of Parliament deputies, Minister of Supply Munir Sobar said the government intends to form a special committee to study the complaints and *reopen the door for families, entitled* to food coupons but denied it in the past, to regain their rights to the purchase of subsidised foodstaff.

"There were some mistakes (in the Ministry of Supply methods of determining the exact number of beneficiaries)," said Mr. Sobar. "But a committee will be formed to study the objections filed by citizens who believe themselves entitled to food coupons but were not listed in the government's final list."

The minister was replying to a complaint filed jointly by three deputies, Nazeeh Amarin, Tawfiq Kreishan and Jamil Hshoush who insisted on the need to reconsider the distribution of food coupons, highly criticised last year as being unfair.

The criteria upon which the government based its list of beneficiary families on was the total monthly income of every family. The families who are entitled to food coupons are those whose income did not exceed JD500.

Parliamentarians charged this government's method was not fair.

"Why are we humiliating the people on purpose?" asked Dr. Amarin. "The former minister asked me once to give him a list of persons who are of interest to me so that he would make sure to extend to them the needed assistance."

"Should we accept such a measure?" Dr. Amarin asked.

Islamic Action Front Deputy Abdul Aziz Jaber accused the Ministry of Supply of inflicting considerable harm on the people.

"How can the minister conclude that every lawyer, doctor and engineer receives a salary above JD500 knowing that some doctors' wages do not reach more than half of this amount?" asked Dr. Jaber.

"And how can the minister consider the wife's salary part of the family's income while the civil status law, based on the Islamic Sharia, excludes the wife from any financial responsibilities ?" he added.

Another IAF deputy, Bassam Emoush, complained that prices of chicken were high and that the commodity was lacking in the local market during especially Ramadan.

"The prices of chicken are rising at a crazy rate," Dr. Emoush said. "It has become a dream for many Jordanian families to be able to taste again the flavour of white meat."

Prices of chicken are rising due to low supply and high demand, selling at between 1,600 and 1,700 fils per kilogramme. Many poultry farmers prefer to sell their poultry to small chicken shops rather than slaughterhouses to get better profit.

The Minister of Supply said that the "chicken crisis" occurs regularly at this time of year but that the ministry will help solve it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sobar added that negotiations are going on with poultry farmers to fix the price of one kilogramme of chicken at 800 fils . But, Mr. Sobar said, the farmers insist on raising the prices to compensate for the losses of last year when chikcen was sold at 600 fils kilogramme per kilogramme.

There is hope that the prices would be fixed at least until the end of Ramadan," the minister added.

In a letter to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Elia Nuqul, president of the General Association for Food Traders, demanded that customs fees on imported frozen chicken be lowered to one per cent with a 20 per cent additional tax plus the slaughterhouse and veterinary charges. He said these charges were fair and would protect the local production and maintain the benefits of local poultry farmers. Whenever there is a shortage, he said, importers would step in to import sufficient quantities to meet the local demand *(see story on page 9)*.

Princess Basma visits southern villages

TAFILEH (PETRA) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, Chairperson of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), Saturday said the charity campaign, which she has launched in Ramadan six years ago will continue.

During a meeting in Jurf Al Darawish, Princess Basma thanked citizens and different institutions for their support and generousity.

The Princess, who also visited Irweim village in Tafileh region, said the charity campaign reflected the people's ture islamic belief and their sense of solidarity.

It also relfected the noble meanings of Ramadan and the traditional Arab values, she said.

Princess Basma donated JD 2,000 to Jurf Al Darawish charitable society and JD 500 to the village's school to enable the school administration to buy books and other education facilities. She also donated JD 2,000 to Irweim's women committee.

Tafileh governor Ahmad Lawzi, who accompanied Princess Basma on her tour, said the unique support Princess Basma extends to the campaign reflects her compassion for the people. Other speakers praised princess Basma's efforts in the social and voluntary field.

Director of the Tafileh chapter of QAF Mahmoud Mahasneh said the fund provides a wide range of services to citizens in the governorate, including maternal and child health care, and income generating activities. QAF granted JD 185,000 worth of loans aimed at easing unemployment and reducing poverty. Since its inception six years ago, the charity campaign provided assistance to some 35,000 needy families.

Cairo talks on displaced persons to focus on sources of statistics

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will participate in a two-day meeting in Cairo which is to focus on the most appropriated sources for statistics on "displaced" Palestinians, and will reaffirm the right of these people to return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to delegation member Abdul Karim Abul Haija.

Mr. Abul Haija, a senior official at the Palestinian Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the meeting will be attended by representatives of Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel.

The four parties will examine statistics provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and will decide on enlisting the help of other U.N. agencies, said Mr. Abul Haija.

The U.N. has estimated the number of Palestinians displaced by the 1967 war with Israel at 350,000 while Israel puts the figure at 200,000 and the PNA at 1.5 million.

Delegations from the four parties held a sixth round of talks on this subject in Haifa early last month following previous sessions in Cairo, Amman, and Gaza.

But the talks failed to reach a solution on the issue of how many displaced Palestinians have the right to return to their former homes .

Mr Abul Haija said the delegates will try to agree on the most accurate sources of information on the number of displaced persons, adding that international research centres in addition to the U.N. agencies could be consulted on the matter.

One of the major points of disagreement between the Israeli and Arab sides has been the inclusion of the Palestinians who were living outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at the outbreak of the 1967 war and who were not able to return to their homes. according to Mr. Abul Haija.

He said the Jordanian delegation, which will be led by Jordanian Ambassador to Sudan Mohammad Shahankari, groups four members including himself.

Tourism ministry signs $500,000 contract to study development of Petra region

AMMAN (Petra)—Minister of Tourism Saleh Irsheidat Sunday signed a $500,000 contract with a local firm to conduct a study for the development of the Petra region as part of the ministry's tourism promotion objectives.

According to Dr. Irsheidat, the study should take six months to complete. He said the cost of the study will be paid from a Japanese government grant to Jordan managed by Arab Bank, Ltd.

The three-phase study, he said, is aimed at creating better and more attractive tourist area in Petra and contributing to the development of the rural and urban regions surrounding the ancient city. It will also seek to identifiy the major obstacles impeding the development of the tourism industry in that area, Dr. Irsheidat said.

According to the contract the first phase of the study covers drawing up general broadlines for the development of the Petra region.

The second, he said, includes preparing urban development designs and plans to include land use and schemes for Wadi Musa, Taybeh, and Um Sayhoun in addition to a Taybeh -Wadi Mousa road, a Wadi Mousa - Um Sayhoun road. Dr. Irsheidat said the third phase entails project design preparations which will take priority in implementation and terms of reference for future phases of the project.He said the important area to come under study covers 300 square kilometres, adding that the firm which will carry out the project will take into account environmental considerations.

Minister of Tourism Saleh Irsheidat Sunday signs a contract with a local firm for a study on the development of the Petra region (Petra photo)

'Health ministry plans to establish new mental health care facility'

AMMAN (Petra) — With only one in-patient facility dedicated to providing mental health care services and recognising the need for additional facilities, the Ministry of Health is planning to establish a 100-bed mental health hospital in Irbid sometime this year.

According to Jalal Qarden, the director general of National Mental Health Centre (NMHC) in Fuheis, Jordan could use several more such hospitals.

He said the Fuheis centre, established in 1967, when the country's population was about half it is today, is unable to accommodate the numbers of mental health patients requiring hospitalisation.

He said plans and designs for the Irbid hospital are ready and he hopes that work on the project will start during 1996.

According to Dr. Qarden, the 414-bed facility in Fuheis is already supported by 31 clinics around the country which offer preliminary psychiatric treatment as well as treatment for epileptic patients. Those psychiatric patients requiring more advance treatment are transferred to the NMHC, said Dr. Qarden.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "Au Revoir Les Enfants," at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

CONCERT

* Musical performance by the Christian Youth Club at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

Ramadan Supermarket," (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Abstract (plastic) art by Mirvat Emile Wahhab at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery (until March 5).

*Paintings by Jordanian and other Arab artists at Alia Art Gallery (untial March 5)

* Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29)

* Printmaking and paintings by Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun.
* Printmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists (until Feb. 18).

Chechen protesters leave square; relatives anxious

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Russian soldiers swept the central square of the Chechen capital Grozny for mines and bombs Sunday after pro-independence demonstrators pulled out, ending a tense week-long stand-off.

Eyewitnesses said the Russian army sent bomb and munitions experts into the devastated presidential palace to check for mines and booby-traps left by guerrillas who may have infiltrated the crowds over the past week.

A few camp-fires burned on the central square Sunday but, apart from Russian soldiers, it was otherwise deserted after demonstrators were taken away in buses Saturday.

Many relatives of demonstrators arrived at the scene Sunday however, complaining that their loved ones had not returned home and loudly demanding to know where they were.

Demonstrators rallied on the square throughout the week calling for the withdrawal of Russian forces from the southern territory and the resignation of Doku Zavgayev's pro-Moscow government.

Local police said the demonstrators had left in dozens of buses after reaching what Mr. Zavgayev described as a compromise.

There were no details of what this compromise might have been. But independent NTV television's reporter said the demonstrators were persuaded to leave after a shooting incident in which six people were killed and 15 injured.

Other journalists at the scene said they may have been influenced by Russian soldiers who had shown them an official order for a Russian detachment to be withdrawn from the Shatoi region south of Grozny.

"All the demonstrators have gone home now by bus," said local policeman Akhmed Chokayev.

But many anxious relatives began arriving near the square Sunday complaining their kin had not arrived home.

Ibragima Halima, 43, said she had waited at home for the arrival of two women family members who had not shown up. "They say they left for home last night. If that is so, why have they not yet come home?", said Halima.

Another woman, Roza Abdurakhmonova, said her daughter who had been taking part in the rally had also not come home. "I'm sure they have taken her and are holding her as a hostage."

The demonstrators, enclosed by a tight circle of troops and local police, began their protest outside Grozny's shattered Presidential Palace on Feb. 4 and, for a whole week, defied Russian army calls on them to disperse.

Mr. Zavgayev, quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency, said his government's "constructive position" and the participation of two of his deputy prime ministers in talks had brought about a peaceful solution.

Russian television's correspondent quoted protesters, who numbered about 500 Saturday compared with the thousands took part in the rally earlier in the week, as saying several shells were fired at them overnight.

TASS said no one was hurt in two clashes Saturday between police and protesters. An explosion of unexplained origin killed one Russian serviceman and two civilians Friday.

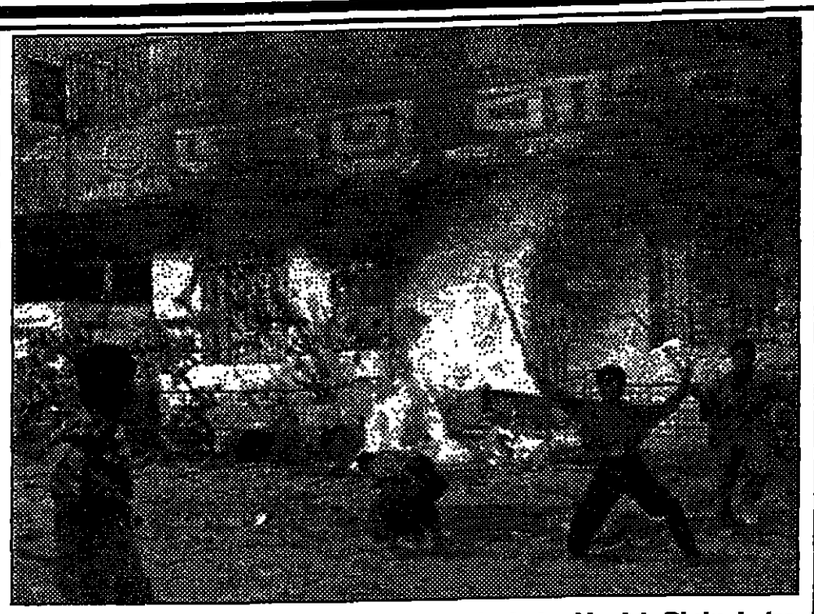
Authorities at a Grozny hospital said that two women and a man, some of 19 people brought in with gunshot wounds in the previous 48 hours, had died Sunday morning.

A 33-year-old woman, Saida, said she had been passing by the rally when an explosion nearby had knocked her unconscious. Just as she recovered, two stray bullets from an exchange of fire hit her in the legs, she said.

Russian television, in footage shot before the protest finally broke up, showed some demonstrators shouting, stamping poles on the ground and jabbing the air with their fists to vent their fury at the continued presence of Russian troops in their southern mountainous region.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin, whose chances of re-election in June will be dimmed without a Chechenya peace settlement, has told Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to form a commission on Chechenya this week.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed, wounded or displaced since Russia sent troops into Chechenya more than a year ago to end its drive for independence.



Opposition activists cheer after they torch a branch of a local bank in Dhaka during battles with police. Nearly 70 people were injured in the battles (Reuter photo)

Top police officer killed 40 people injured in Bangladesh violence

DHAKA (R) — A senior police officer was shot dead and at least 40 people were injured Sunday in continuing riots ahead of Bangladesh parliamentary elections next Thursday, police and witnesses said.

They said Assistant Commissioner Bashir Ali was hit by several bullets during battles betwen police and opposition activists in Chittagong Port City. He died later in hospital.

At least 40 people were hurt by bombs thrown by the activists and teargas and batons used by police, witnesses said.

Police said 12 people, including three policemen, had been killed and about 350 wounded in Bangladesh election violence since Feb. 1.

All major opposition parties are boycotting the election, saying they knew it would be rigged to ensure victory for Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's party.

Main opposition leader Sheikh Hasina said Sunday she already knew the results of Feb. 15 elections and urged foreign governments not to accept them.

"The results of the vote are known. 59 out of 300 candidates of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have won unopposed. A list made in advance of other successful candidates is with the prime minister," she told Reuters.

All major opposition parties, including Mrs. Hasina's Awami League and its allies the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-E-Islami, are boycotting the elections.

"I would appeal to all democracy-loving people including the foreign governments not to accept the election — which is not an election at all," Mrs. Hasina said.

"No election under it can be free and fair," she said. "That's why we decided to boycott the polls although we have mass support."

Mrs. Hasina made the outburst as Mrs. Khaleda was visiting northern district of Sirajganj for campaigning, defying an opposition-called one-day strike.

"She is trying to perpetuate her power...has no respect for people's senitiments," Mrs. Hasina said.

Mrs. Khaleda told an election rally in the northern city of Rajshahi Saturday that "there's no force on earth to stop the elections," she warned that those trying to disrupt the vote would be brought to justice.

Opposition parties alleged that Mrs. Khaleda's government rigged a 1994 parliamentary by-election which made them believe that future polls will also be tampered with.

Mrs. Khaleda, elected in 1991 in what were billed as Bangladesh's first free polls, has rejected the charge, and refused to accept opposition demands that she step down.

Mrs. Khaleda's BNP is the only major party in the election along with a host of mostly obscure parties. "Everyone knows they are holding a one-party election. This is just a farce," Mrs. Hasina said.

She said her party's aim was to restore democracy and human rights in Bangladesh, which she said had been grossly violated since her father sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's independence leader was killed in a 1975 military coup.

Diana demands to retain title of Royal Highness

LONDON (AFP) — The Princess of Wales has made her agreement to a divorce from the heir to the British throne conditional on being allowed to keep her title of Royal Highness, the Sunday Times reported here. The paper, quoting government sources, said this was just one of the questions related to her status which Princess Diana wanted settled before her lawyers began negotiations with Prince Charles's representatives. Others included a guarantee that she would be invited to state functions attended by her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, and that she would be allowed an office in Buckingham Palace and continue to live at Kensington Palace. The paper said that Buckingham Palace wanted the divorce question settled before the 70th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II in April to avoid continued press speculation about her son and daughter-in-law marring the occasion. In another incident involving the palace and the media, the Sunday Times reported that a planned independent television series on the royal art collections at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle had been scrapped because the two sides could not agree on the contents of the programme.

Scientist invents rabbit-powered mower

CANBERRA (R) — An Australian scientist has designed the ultimate environment-friendly way to cut grass — a rabbit-powered lawn-mower. The Australian National University's Nigel Wace said that the prototype mower, called a Rolling Rabbit Run, was powered by two large male rabbits, Flotsam and Jetsam. The silent, self-fuelling mower is a six-metre-long (20-ft-long) cylindrical cage built from recycled bicycle wheels and large-gauge wire netting, all salvaged from a nearby dump. Flotsam and Jetsam have been taught to roll the cage to find new pastures after nibbling the grass beneath them, fertilising as they go, Mr. Wace said. "It is admittedly quite slow but the speed does depend on how hungry they are," he told Reuters. Within the cage the rabbits have a hutch made from a bucket to give them shelter from the elements. The university's animal ethics committee has approved the rolling cage and is monitoring the health and well-being of the rabbits who have been made visiting fellows of the university.

Michael Jackson mobbed by brazilian fans

SALVADOR, Brazil (R) — Pop superstar Michael Jackson took a tumble Saturday when thousands of fans heaved against police lines to catch a glimpse of their hero during the filming of a video that officials tried in vain to ban. The selection of Salvador's historic district of Pelourinho, once a hive of prostitution, as the backdrop for Jackson's latest video excited legions of fans who pressed against a four-deep cordon. During filming in a narrow street, a woman burst through the cordon, enveloping Jackson in a tight hug. As two police officers struggled to get her off, the group tumbled to the cobblestones. "It was just a little hug, it was the others who knocked him down. I felt an urge to do it," chambermaid Solange Xavier Dos Santos said to reporters. Despite bids to ban the shoot, U.S. film director Spike Lee set cameras rolling just after dawn Saturday on 200 drummers from percussion band Olodum as they swayed to the heavy beat of Salvador's "samba-reggae" music.

Death toll rises to 6 in Jakarta floods

JAKARTA (AFP) — At least six people died in severe flooding which swept through Jakarta following heavy monsoonal rain, authorities were quoted as saying by the Antara News Agency late Sunday.

"The latest reports indicate that six residents of Jakarta have died," Jakarta Deputy Governor R.S. Museno said.

He identified five of the dead as: Fajar Ambaro, 11, Hussein Bin Olani, 17, Saijah, 40, Rohimin, 20 and Martingah, 70.

The sixth victim, 25 year old Sri Wayatun died from an electric shock when an electricity cable fell into flood waters near him.

The death toll could rise as an official at the West Jakarta Flood Control Post early Sunday said four people died in the floods, although it was not immediately clear if these were further victims or included in the six named by the governor.

Authorities were late Sunday distributing boxes of noodles, water and rice to families in the flood struck areas, Mr. Museno said.

Workers from the state telephone company P.T. Telekomunikasi Indonesia were working to restore some of the some 75,000 telephone lines that were cut in the rising waters.

The floods inundated parts of the city that are not normally flood prone. Jalan Thamrin, one of Jakarta's main roads, and the National Monument Square, was covered by 60 centimetres (24 inches) of water.

Thousands of people fled their homes and spent the night at the homes of relatives or friends as the water receded slowly in the worst-hit areas.

"I spent the night in my car because we had 50 centimetres of water in our house. But we were the lucky ones, other neighbours had two metres of water," said a resident of Bendungan Hilir, a Jakarta suburb near the swollen Malang River.

Thousands more of the population, who are coming to the end of the Ramadan Muslim fasting month, were without power and telephones.

Heavy rain caused power cuts which left traffic lights out of order and caused huged tailbacks on major roads. Some people abandoned their cars and sat under bus shelters waiting for the jams to clear.

Garuda Indonesia Airline said 45 domestic and regional flights were delayed because passengers and crew were held up in the traffic jams, the Jakarta Post reported.

No international flights were affected, but incoming passengers took up to four hours to reach central Jakarta Saturday night.

It is the second time in four weeks that Jakarta has been hit by severe floods. Last month six people were killed and thousands again forced onto the streets after flash floods.

A mother carries her child while another woman holds a basket on her head as they wade through floodwaters in central Jakarta Sunday. Flooding in the capital from heavy rains Friday and Saturday has killed at least six people as well as caused chaos in the Indonesian capital (Reuter photo)

India willing to talk to former Kashmiri militants

NEW DELHI (R) — The Indian government said Sunday that it was prepared to hold talks with former Kashmiri guerrillas to try to end a six-year uprising against Indian rule in Kashmir.

"We are prepared to discuss this," Home (Interior) Secretary K. Padmanabhaiah told Reuters.

He was responding to a surprise offer Thursday by four former militants who had been released from jail, to hold direct talks with New Delhi without the participation of Pakistan.

The all parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference, representing more than 30 leading separatist groups in the Kashmir Valley, quickly denounced the former guerrillas as Indian agents.

The Hurriyat suffered another setback at the weekend when Master Ahsan Dar, a founder of the hardline, pro-Pakistan Hizb-Ul-Mujahideen group who is now in an Indian jail, supported the offer to hold negotiations with the government.

"This new initiative is a welcome step," Mr. Dar said in a statement from jail and distributed to newspapers. "The hope which we had from the movement, for which we shed our blood, remained only a hope and did not become a reality."

Police and hospital officials estimate more than 20,000 people have died since the uprising erupted in 1990 in India's only Muslim-majority state.

India accuses Pakistan, which controls one third of Kashmir, of arming and training guerrillas. Islamabad says it provides only moral and diplomatic support.

The Hurriyat has insisted on tripartite talks involving its representatives along with Indian and Pakistani officials.

But the four former militants, who had been in the ranks of the Hizb-Ul-Mujahideen, Muslim Janbaz Force, Muslim Mujahideen and Al-Barq guerrilla groups, said they were ready to leave out Pakistan, at least initially.

"Each of the four militant leaders has a strong base in the underground movement and as such their action marks a major turning point," the Sunday Observer newspaper said.

N. Korea denies facing mass defection

TOKYO (R) — North Korea Sunday criticised what it said was the South's move to prepare for a mass defection from across the border, saying such reports of an exodus were "groundless".

"The Kim Young-Sam group of South Korea, through the puppet Red Cross and 'government'-serving media, are groundlessly alleging that 'mass defection' is expected from people in the North," said a statement by a spokesman for the Central Committee of the North Korean Red Cross Society.

"Our people are devotedly working hard to defend and further develop their socialism centred on the popular masses, with great national pride of having respected General Kim Jong-Il, a peerless great man and the lodestar of national reunification, as their great leader," said the statement carried on the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

KCNA is monitored in Tokyo.

A North Korean diplomat and his wife arrived in Seoul last month after they sought asylum at the South Korean embassy in Lusaka.

Another North Korean official, who was once assigned to the North Korean embassy in Zambia, also arrived in Seoul in January.

More than 40 North Korean loggers have defected to the South since the 1950-53 Korean War, according to Seoul government figures.

South Korea has said it will continue to accept defecting North Koreans on humanitarian grounds.

North Korea has been reported to be on the brink of famine by the World Food Programme.

Keating scores narrow win in Australia election debate

CANBERRA (R) — Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, fighting for the life of his 13-year-old Labour government, narrowly defeated his conservative opposition rival in a televised debate Sunday.

But political analysts said Mr. Keating had failed to score the decisive victory that his flagging campaign needed ahead of the March 2 general election.

Mr. Keating, unable to peg back opposition leader John Howard's strong lead in the opinion polls, appealed to voters not to turn their backs on his government's economic reforms and its push into the dynamic economies of Asia.

"If people believe they can (give) three years to the opposition, to a party trying to copy-cat the government, to adopt the government's policies ... I assure them that the fire will go out," Mr. Keating said in the live, hour-long debate.

"What's kept Australia changing in this decade is a government prepared to take the hard decisions and to make a change."

A poll of the specially-selected audience who watched the television debate gave Mr. Keating 51 per cent against Mr. Howard's 49 per cent.

Labour Party strategists had been looking to the debate to turn Mr. Keating's campaign around.

"There was no killer punch," television political commentator Paul Lynham said.

"I don't think Howard has come away from this tonight significantly down in his standing in the community. I don't think Keating has done himself an enormous amount of good."

Mr. Howard, seizing on Labour's long period in office, said: "This present government has now been in power 13 years and it's developed all the signs of arrogance, of being out of touch, of taking people for granted."

Earlier Sunday, Mr. Keating gave details of how he would fund Australian dollars 3.5 billion ($2.6 billion) of Labour's election promises by announcing a tax crackdown on very wealthy Australians and other revenue and savings measures.

Announcing the tax crackdown, Mr. Keating said his government was the first major political party in Australian history to go to the polls with an offer to strengthen the budget instead of unmitigated pork-barrelling, or vote-buying.

"This must be the first election in Australian federal history where the government's actually strengthened the budget during the course of the election campaign," he told reporters.

Mr. Keating has promised everything from more free health insurance to a new ferry for the island state of Tasmania — in his quest for a record sixth consecutive Labour victory.

He said his assault on tax avoiders and other revenue measures would more than pay for his plans.

Mr. Howard has pledged to explain this week how he will pay for his election promises, also worth billions of dollars.

His opposition coalition of the conservative Liberal and National Parties leads the government by about nine percentage points in the main public opinion polls.

Mr. Keating and Mr. Howard, who have each spent about 25 years in parliament, said in the debate they would quit politics if they lose on March 2.

Philippines seizes suspected pirate ship

MANILA (R) — The Philippine Navy Saturday seized a suspected Chinese pirate ship and its 20 crewmen after they tried to ram a navy boat in a gunbattle northwest of Manila, officials said Sunday.

There were no casualties in the second sea clash in three weeks between the Philippine Navy and suspected Chinese vessels off the Subic Bay Free Port, an area notorious for pirates.

"Definitely this is a foreign ship, possibly Chinese. The crew looks like Chinese," Navy Chief Vice-Admiral Pio Carranza told reporters. Their ID cards don't match their ages or their faces. This is a suspected pirate ship."

Two navy patrol ships and a gunboat engaged the intruding vessel, driving it back to land with a heavy barrage of gunfire when it tried to flee to the high seas, Adm. Carranza said.

Captain Ernesto De Leon, who commanded the navy force, personally briefed President Fidel Ramos on the incident, underlining the importance Manila was attaching to the incident.

Mr. Ramos abruptly ended the briefing after Capt. De Leon said his crew seized many documents aboard, including a seaman's book bearing the "red star".

"You continue the investigation," Mr. Ramos said, cutting short the officer's account.

In the first incident on Jan. 22, a Philippine Navy craft and a suspected Chinese vessel exchanged shots in a 90-minute encounter that ended when the Philippine boat ran out of fuel.

The navy later said it believed the foreign vessel had sunk. Its identity has not been clearly established but the navy later said it was probably a Chinese pirate boat. China denied its ships were involved in that incident.

Saturday's clash erupted after the foreign vessel ignored warnings from a navy boat. It later tried to ram the navy boat and opened fire on it. Capt. De Leon told President Ramos.

"They were using rifles, AK-47s most likely, sir," he said.

The navy would not say if arms were found aboard the ship but Adm. Carranza said its crew were seen throwing items overboard before they were captured.

South Korean elders chant anti-Japan slogans in a Seoul park Sunday, while waving Korean national flags after Japan's claim to disputed islands in the Sea of Japan spark patrotic fury in Seoul (Reuter photo)

Dynamite gamble fails in Japan tunnel tragedy

TOKYO (R) — Japanese rescue workers failed Sunday to dynamite a giant boulder off a collapsed road tunnel in which 20 people were entombed in two vehicles and hope had virtually run out of finding the motorists alive.

The blasting operation was a last-ditch gamble to reach the victims — 19 in a bus and a lone motorist — who have been trapped since Saturday morning in the tunnel on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido.

Relatives gave permission for the blasting operation after round-the-clock efforts in light snow to reach the vehicles from either side were thwarted by tonnes of fallen rock and soil.

The tragedy happened when a giant tear-shaped rock slab slid off the side of a mountain overlooking the tunnel and speared into its roof, opening a breach through which poured dozens of tonnes of debris at about 8 a.m. on Saturday (2300 GMT Friday).

Rescue workers hoped that if the giant boulder could have been blasted off the roof they might have been able to reach the motorists from the tunnel roof.

Workers, only able to see the scene through special scanning equipment poked through debris, said the front and back of the bus were crushed and there were no sounds or signs of movement.

They were able to see the bus driver's hat and one hand but calls to him went unanswered.

"We are worried time has probably run out now for the people inside," one rescue official said.

When the rock slab fell, a 40-metre stretch of the ceiling crashed down from just inside one of the entrances of the 1,086 metre long Toyohama Tunnel about 50 kilometres northwest of Hokkaido's capital city of Sapporo.

The rupture started before the tunnel burrows into the mountain through which it passes on a highway running along the Sea of Japan coast between the towns of Yoichi and Furubira.

Rescue workers estimate the 60 metre high and 40 metre wide slab of rock that was responsible for the breach weighs about 50 tonnes.

Geology experts said landslides were a constant hazard on Hokkaido, an island regularly shaked by earthquakes and blanketed by snow for up to six months of the year.

They said earth tremors first opened small cracks in rocks which were widened by ice forming in them from the constant snow leading to regular massive rock falls.

A police spokesman said all family members of the victims gave their consent to the blasting operation and were aware it could have caused a new collapse which would have made the plight of their loved ones even more desperate.

However most relatives already appeared steeled for bad news even before the dynamiting was carried out.

"The bus is crushed, and I doubt if my daughter is still alive. I just want them to hurry up with the work," the father of a 17-year-old girl on the bus told television stations.

"My son appears to be trapped in the back of the bus between some rocks, and he could still be alive. But, if I don't give my consent work won't progress," another father said.

Rescue workers planted a total of 220 kilogrammes of dynamite at 21 points in the slab but when they were detonated, the massive boulder only slid about a foot off the tunnel roof leaving most of it still on top.

"We did not achieve our aim of removing the boulder because we cut the amount of dynamite for safety reasons," rescue official Makoto Niiyama said.

He did not rule out further blasting operations, but not until Monday at the earliest, to remove the slab.

U.S, Russia build relationship as elections near

HELSINKI (R) — The United States and Russia have laid the foundations of a relationship which they hope will provide stability in the foreign arena in a year when both face presidential elections.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and new Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, as expected, made no significant breakthroughs at more than six hours of talks in the Finnish capital Friday and Saturday.

But the talks went some way to reassure Mr. Christopher that he can work with Mr. Primakov, a conservative whose appointment on Jan. 9 alarmed some U.S. officials, and provided guarantees that Mr. Yeltsin will persevere with reforms.

For his part, Mr. Primakov made no big concessions and declared that he and Mr. Christopher must be equal partners — words intended to appease Russian opposition leaders and members of parliament who are demanding a more assertive foreign policy.

"This marks the beginning of a new and practical set of working relationships between Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and myself," Mr. Christopher told reporters before flying home.

"The commitment to democracy (in Russia) seems to be a deep one and an enduring one."

U.S. officials said the two sides would step up consultations, particularly on regional issues, to ensure there were no unwelcome "surprises" in their relationship.

They remained far apart on NATO's plans to expand to incorporate countries of Eastern and Central Europe, moves which Moscow says would threaten its security.

But Mr. Primakov said he hoped a solution to the problem could be found and U.S. officials said the talks were "conciliatory".

Both sides supported quick ratification of the START-2 strategic arms reduction treaty and broadly agreed on nuclear security issues, the theme of an eight-nation summit in Moscow in April which U.S. President Bill Clinton will attend.

Mr. Primakov sought to reassure Mr. Christopher that a deal to transfer nuclear technology to Iran would not help Tehran build atomic weapons and said Russia would support continued sanctions on Iraq, despite a reported oil deal with Baghdad.

"We have differences, but all this must be done (resolved) without confrontation. That would be extremely dangerous for our mutual relations and also for the whole world," Mr. Primakov said.

In a gesture to his domestic audience, he added: "We agreed that our relationship will be on a basis of complete equality."

His remarks were intended to demonstrate that he will defend Russia's interests staunchly and make sure its voice is heard in world diplomacy. His predecessor, Andrei Kozyrev, was accused by Russian conservatives and some liberals of failing to do either.

Mr. Christopher and Mr. Primakov are expected to meet again in Moscow in the second half of March.

Their talks have made clear that Moscow and Washington are ready to agree to differ on the most difficult issues for the time being, partly to be able to concentrate on domestic issues before this year's presidential elections.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, whose term expires in June, has not yet said if he will seek re-election but is expected to announce his intentions this week. He can ill afford to let major international problems add to his difficulties at home.

His popularity has sunk since he sent troops to Chechenya 14 months ago to try to quell an independence drive and December's parliamentary election signalled a Communist resurgence and widespread disenchantment with hardships suffered under reforms.

Japan's island claim sparks patriotic fury in Seoul

Seoul (R) — South Korea whipped itself into a nationalistic fervour Sunday as citizens' groups took to the streets to protest against renewed Japanese claims to two disputed islands.

Protesters held anti-Japanese rallies in Seoul, burning the Japanese flag along with an effigy of Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda.

The protests came one day after President Kim Young-Sam cancelled a meeting with Tokyo legislators and threatened to scrap a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto.

All major newspapers carried pictures of the Korean national flag fluttering over the Tokdo Islands, barren outcrops of rock in the Sea of Japan with no more than a handful of permanent residents.

Mr. Ikeda sparked Korean outrage last week by lodging a diplomatic protest against work begun by South Korea to improve a wharf on the islands. He again asserted Tokyo's sovereignty over the specks of land midway between Japan and South Korea.

About 300 protesters gathered in a Seoul park to vent their anger against Korea's former colonial master. In a written statement, the chairman of the Association of Korea Christian Church Youth, one of protest organisers, said: "It is insane and unreasonable for Japan to protest our construction of a wharf".

Park Chan-Sung said Japan's actions were a "second attempt to invade our country. Japan should fire those who made remarks on Tokdo Island and apologise".

Another protest leader, Lee Dae-Young of the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice, said: "Japan's claim to Tokdo is a blasphemy to our history and people".

On Saturday a spokesman for President Kim branded Tokyo's claim to the islands "preposterous" and "intolerable" and said Japan was again "glorifying its past crimes".

The hardline official response, just two months before general elections, plays well with a Korean public that is ultra-sensative about Tokyo's brutal 35-year colonisation of the Korean peninsula that ended in 1945.

Even opposition parties have joined Mr. Kim's ruling New Korea Party in taking up an issue loaded with patriotic symbolism. Both sides have condemned Tokyo's stand.

Japan has claimed the islands, which it calls Takeshima, since 1905 when it signed an agreement with Korea that paved the way for colonisation. Seoul has stationed security police on the islands since 1954.

Conflicting media reports put the civilian population at between one and four, and some reports saying the only permanent residents are a man and his wife.

The Korean Foreign Ministry could give no details and security officials contacted on the island declined all comment.

Indian, Pakistani troops trade gunfire on Kashmir border

JAMMU, India (AFP) — A official spokesman Sunday denied a charge by Pakistan that Indian troops had begun the firing on military posts on the Kashmir border overnight Saturday which ended 12 days of calm.

"Pakistan has again tried to mount tension on the border after a lull of 12 days by firing at Chamliyal Post, some 45 kilometres southwest of this state winter capital in Sambah sector since yesterday," a Kashmir government spokesman said.

"Indian Border Security Forces also returned the fire," he said. "It has become routine for Pakistani troops to adopt such tactics to give cover to militants and mercenaries attempting to slip into India."

Pakistani troops started the "unprovoked firing" late Saturday and it continued past midnight, the officials said.

A spokesman for India's Border Security Force said the Pakistani gunfire involved medium and light machine guns. "the Pakistanis began firing from two border posts (Saturday)," the spokesman said.

"The firing went on for almost three hours ... They used mainly medium weapons. More than 30,000 rounds were fired by them."

A villager was injured in the firing and hospitalised, officials said.

Meanwhile, a Pakistani spokesman in Islamabad confirmed the incident but said the tension was caused by Indian Border Guards who started firing first. He denied Indian allegations that Pakistani forces gave cover to militants.

Officials said Chamliyal, the scene of the firing, was a holy site for both Hindus and Muslims who gather there every June to attend a fair, dedicated to a Hindu mendicant who lived about two centuries ago.

The soil of the area is believed to have healing powers. Several thousand devotees rub it on their skins during the fair. The soil is also transported across the border to Pakistan.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training Muslim militants fighting to end Indian rule over Kashmir, where a bitter separatist campaign has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

Pakistan denies the charge but gives open diplomatic support to the unrest, calling it a legitimate struggle for self-determination. Kashmir is India's only Muslim-majority state.

India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of Kashmir, and have fought two of their three wars over the picturesque province.

Rwandans vow to defy new Zairean campaign

KIBUMBA CAMP, Zaire (R) — Rwandan refugees vowed Sunday to remain in camps in eastern Zaire and to defy a Zairean operation to pressure them to return home voluntarily.

"Protect us God," sang thousands of Hutu refugees, Bible in hand, facing priests in white robes at a mass in Kibumba, named by authorities as the first of 40 camps for one million refugees to be closed.

The mood in Kibumba, a small city of 190,000 people carved out of bush and planted on volcanic rock in 1994, was defiant.

"We fear nothing. We will stay in our camps. We will move nowhere," said Jean-Baptiste Harerimana, a refugee who works for a Western aid agency in Kibumba. The crowd around him agreed.

The refugees are from Rwanda's Hutu majority and fled in 1994 during civil war and the genocide of up to a million Tutsis and Hutu moderates killed by Hutu troops, militiamen and mobs.

Rwanda's government says it will screen all male returnees to discover whether they killed in the genocide. Some refugees say they fear they will be killed in reprisal if they return.

A private radio station in the Zairean border town of Goma quoted Zairean Foreign Minister Gerard Kamanda Wa Kamanda as saying that the closure of camps was frozen as the U.N. refugee agency violated an agreement by announcing plans in advance.

Officials of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Goma were unavailable to comment on the Sunday radio report.

Interior Minister Gustave Malumba Mbangula gave details Saturday of the operation to speed up voluntary repatriation but did not say when it would start.

Views of extremist Hutu leaders appeared to have toughened the resolve of most refugees since the campaign was made public.

When Zaire expelled 15,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees last August many said they would escape to the mountains. Tens of thousands only returned when forced repatriations stopped.

But dozens of refugees interviewed Sunday said they would remain in Kibumba even when troops arrive and would not panic.

Beatrice Miseneza, a woman with a baby born in the camp strapped to her back, said: "We will all stay calm. We will wait until the Zairean soldiers come. UNHCR will look after us."

Under the plan, troops will ring Kibumba to stop all refugee movements in and out of the camp and halt all private commercial ventures by refugees which depend on supplies from the outside.

Zairean officials will launch a mass education campaign in the camps to encourage refugees to leave. Aid agencies will only be allowed to continue their essential operations in the camps such as supplying water, food, sanitation and health services.

Some aid workers fear the campaign may turn violent as most troops are poorly-disciplined and have not been paid for months.

As well as encircling the camps, Zairean troops are charged with neutralising intimidators loyal to Rwanda's former Hutu leaders who discourage refugees from returning. At the least, they forecast they will all be slaughtered when they go home.

Aloys Ngendahimana, a vice-president of the Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda, a Hutu refugee lobby group, said it was too early for leaders to react to the plan.

Pope alludes to problem of corruption in Venezuela

CARACAS (R) — Pope John Paul, on the penultimate day of a Latin American tour, urged Venezuelans to reach beyond party politics and egoism in order to stamp out corruption and fight poverty.

Addressing 2,500 "Builders of Society" — businessmen, union leaders, intellectuals, farmers, and housewives — the Pope appealed to them "to work for the real good of the country ... with honesty both in your private and professional lives."

The 75-year-old Pontiff, speaking at a modern arts and music theatre in central Caracas and looking tired, said stark social inequalities tended to breed moral crisis with "lack of ethics, of justice, of social togetherness, of respect for life and human dignity."

Stressing the Catholic Church's constant concern about social justice, the Pope said that "material impoverishment often leads to moral and spiritual impoverishment ... in particular among the youth."

In the most political speech since his arrival in Venezuela Friday on the last leg of a week-long Latin American tour, the Pope advised politicians to "overcome partisan differences and reach beyond personal interests ... in the unselfish quest for the common good" of the people.

He did not use the word "corruption" but, saying Venezuela was at a "difficult but decisive" period of its history, he condemned those who lead an "egoistic existence," lack "responsibility" or are driven by "the will to dominate."

Earlier Saturday, the Pope travelled to the remote sanctuary of Our Lady Of Coromoto, Venezuela's patron saint, to dedicate a new shrine to the Madonna who is said to have appeared to an Indian chief in 1652.

The Pope was expected to return to Rome on Sunday.

President Bill Clinton smiles as he stands among a cascade of white balloons dropping from the ceiling of the University of Iowa's Carver Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, Iowa after Mr. Clinton spoke to a crowd of more than 10,000 people at a campaign appearance (Reuter photo)

Clinton ends Iowa campaign swing

DES MOINES, Iowa (R) — President Bill Clinton Sunday winds up a whirlwind weekend campaign swing through Iowa with a visit to a grain elevator, dinner with Iowa farm families and brunch with victims of the devastating 1993 midwestern floods.

Mr. Clinton is running unopposed for renomination by his party for a second term, but he asked Iowa Democrats to show up for Monday's caucuses so he could enjoy a big win in the state, where he lost overwhelmingly four years ago to Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa.

Mr. Clinton's gruelling weekend campaign schedule included two speeches Saturday in which he recited a list of accomplishments and crowed about a growing economy with low inflation and high exports of agriculture goods, which he said was helping support grain prices.

Mr. Clinton told an audience in Mason City that during his afternoon visit to a grain elevator in clear lake he said to himself that "if corn prices stay above $3 (a bushel), I ought to do all right in Iowa."

During the speech, Mr. Clinton voiced concerns about a farm bill passed last week by the Senate. He said he was worried about the way payments were structured regardless of crop prices and that it might spell trouble in hard times when prices fall.

"I think we have to really think about whether it is reasonable to say that we are going to have this flat payment and you get it whether you plant or not, and you get it no matter how high the crop (prices) are, and then when the crops go to the bottom, you won't have enough to help you keep you out of bankruptcy," Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Clinton also discussed agriculture issues with seven farm families Saturday night over a dinner that included barbecued pork sandwiches, lemon chicken, potato salad and baked beans.

Mr. Clinton, a self-styled "new democrat" who, rhetorically at least, shuns the big government philosophy with which his party historically has been identified, outlined in his speeches his vision of a lean, but strong federal government.

Meanwhile Bob Dole, the 72-year-old U.S. Senate leader twice denied his party's presidential nomination, appeared poised Sunday to win a key vote in Iowa and kick off his most promising chase yet for the prize.

But the state's party precinct caucuses Monday were also likely to produce a notable showing by Steve Forbes, the wealthy publisher who has never been elected to public office but has poured millions of dollars of his own fortune into a bid to win the world's most powerful position.

The closing hours of the battle for Iowa, a year-long contest in which Republicans have savaged each other with increasing fury, produced a confident Dole leading in polls and attacking not his rivals for the nomination but President Bill Clinton.

"I believe we're in a very defining moment in American history and the one obstacle in the way ... is President Clinton in the White House," Sen. Dole told backers inside a corrugated metal machinery shed on a muddy farm near Des Moines.

"If you want your vote to count, you want to go to the caucus and vote for someone who can defeat President Clinton in November 1996," he said. "That's what this is all about."

About 130,000 Republicans are expected to turn out at 7 p.m. local time Monday for 2,142 precinct-level meetings across Iowa's 99 counties. They will take a straw poll — the first major test of election year strength — which begins the process of sending the state's 25 delegates to this summer's party nominating convention.

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Electioneering might backfire

ISRAELI OPPOSITION leader Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud Party appear ready and prepared to change their stance on the issue of recognising the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and its foundation, the autonomy accords struck between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the Labour Party. We might think the Likud would have readied itself for such a switch some time ago for obvious real political reasons. But the seemingly abrupt change of heart does not reflect a sudden "love affair" between the main right-wing faction in Israel and the PLO which negotiated the two Oslo accords with the late Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and his successor the incumbent prime minister, Shimon Peres. Rather, it stems from a pragmatic yet grudging acceptance of what has already been done on the Palestinian track in a bid to recapture power at the next Knesset elections.

What may have most influenced Netanyahu and his supporters within the Likud Party is not only the overwhelming international endorsement of Oslo I and II but also the fact that the greater majority of the Israelis are now in support of the autonomy talks. A Gallop poll published recently in Israel confirmed that about 60 per cent of Israeli voters support the accords on Palestinian autonomy. This is not to mention the fact that the recent Palestinian elections gave an added legitimacy to the PNA and the newly elected Palestinian council.

The Likud Party is obviously interested in power and its leadership understands only too well that time is running out on their chances of ever returning to government as long as they stick to their archaic doctrinaire views on the West Bank. This aboutface within the Likud may not enjoy smooth sailing, however, and a rebellion or two within the party may still forestall any formal decision to recognise the PNA and the Oslo accords. Diehard Likudniks such as members of Knesset Benny Begin and Ariel Sharon still represent an important constituency within the party and with their comrades in arm they may still prevent Netanyahu from going to the extent that he is now forced to take in dealing with the Palestinian ledership.

If it turns out, though, that even the moderate members of the Likud are just making a tactical electoral manoeuvre to satisfy their lust for power, then their tactics are bound to backfire sooner or later. The Arab side, including the Palestinians, would of course welcome the switch in the Likud if it actually reflects a genuine change of heart. In answer to Netanyahu's recent statement that he does not "exclude any possible partner in the Arab World," President Arafat likewise signalled his willingness to deal with any Israeli government that may assume power in the future.

We hope the stage is thus set for more sane Israeli-Palestinian relations no matter which Israeli party wins the upcoming general elections, or even which Palestinian leader takes over in the future.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Sunday hailed King Hussein's visit to Saudi Arabia as a major event that would restore the traditional strong ties between the two countries and open up new avenues for future cooperation. The visit, which is taking place in the holy month of Ramadan, bears great significance at the bilateral and pan-Arab levels and the talks the King plans to hold with the Saudi monarch are bound to benefit the people of the two countries, said the daily. Jordanians, who appreciate Saudi Arabia's continued assistance to Jordan over the past years, especially in difficult times, are optimistic that the meeting of the two leaders would strengthen the Arab stand and help Jordan face the chllenges of the coming stage and contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance regional and international cooperation for the building of peace in the Middle East, continued the paper. Referring to King Hussein's statement to a visiting U.S. senator delegation last week, in which he said that Jordan's ties with the Gulf state are progressing, the paper said that the King's visit to Saudi Arabia is an embodiment of Jordan's policies and gives credence to the Kingdom efforts to rebuild inter-Arab relations on very solid foundations and restore the long sought solidarity among the Arab countries.

Reflecting on the Israeli elections due in May, Mohammad Kawash, a writer for **Al Dustour** said that the rivalry between the ruling Labour Party and the opposition Likud Party will no doubt revolve around the peace process, the withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the Jewish settlements and the Jerusalem issue. The Arabs of Israel, who are for the peace process, are bound to vote for the Labour Party or for the Arab parties which support Labour, and their votes are to be counted for in the coming elections, according to the writer. What is required from the Arab community, said the writer, is to show unity and cohesion in their stand for the peace process and work to bring as many Arab deputies to the Knesset as possible in order to help their countrymen achieve their aspirations in the Palestinian homeland.

Human Rights File

By Waleed M. Sa'di

Challenges to Kabariti's 'white revolution'

THE WHITE revolution that the youthful and soft-spoken new Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is mandated to carry out may turn out to be much more difficult than originally thought. Conventional wisdom reminds us that old ideas die hard and governments seldom succeed in transforming themselves into contemporary establishments overnight, no matter how much effort is exerted into this attempt.

The new prime minister cannot of course rely solely on the young age of his team to execute a plan of action that may at the end triumph over the many obstacles that stand in its way. There are many young people around whose ideas are old, just as there are some old men and women whose thoughts are contemporary, if not outright revolutionary.

New blood in the full sense of the word is not exactly easy to come by these days because we are all products of our environment no matter how tender is our age.

Psychologists keep telling us that the personality of men and women is determined during the formative years of their lives and everything that occurs in their lives thereafter would be of little consequence.

I doubt that the psychological profile of the men and women who make up the Kabariti team was so carefully checked out to decide whether they are truly of a vintage that would be necessary to implement the peaceful revolution in our ranks.

Yet there is already ample evidence that the Kabariti government may succeed after all in its effort to transform the country into a modern state.

The first sign is the awareness of Mr. Kabariti himself that a change in style of government is overdue. The prime minister has not only talked about this subject but also made it the mainstay of the new order that he would like to usher in to his people.

Mr. Kabariti has also been busy making overtures to professional associations in a bid to turn a new page on how best to handle these groups of professionals. The classic example of withdrawing the case against the president of the Jordan Bar Association and his council, that was instituted by the former government of HRH Prince Zeid Ben Shaker to challenge the results of the recent elections of the association. It is but one proof that Mr. Kabariti is not on the same wavelength as his predecessor on this score.

It appears that the prime minister wishes to deploy the friendly persuasion approach to defuse the dispute between the lawyers of the country with their colleagues across the River Jordan on whether the latter are eligible to vote in the association's elections or they are non-Jordanians who have lost this right when the country severed all administrative and legal relations with the West Bank.

Obviously Mr. Kabariti has reached some understanding with Kamal Nasser, the president of the association, on this matter. Otherwise, Mr. Nasser would not have joined the new Cabinet and accepted a portfolio unrelated to his profession in return for terminating the state's case against the association.

Does this development on the legal front mean that a honeymoon is in the making between the new government and all the professional associations? We have to wait and see how the Jordan Engineers Association is going to be handled at a time when its incumbent president, Laith Shbeilat, is in detention and the Engineers Association is gearing itself to yet other politically charged elections.

So the big test is whether the new government will succeed in its determined effort to establish a new modus vivendi with professional groups based on His Majesty King Hussein's repeated calls on such groups to stay away from politics.

Where Mr. Kabariti may have also succeeded in sending another clear signal that he is sincere in his determination to change things could be the statement of the new Minister of Information Marwan Muasher that he intends to abolish his ministry.

Dr. Muasher's early words on impending reforms within his ministry, which would lead to its dissolution altogether are like a breathe of fresh air. This comes as no surprise since the minister was an active columnist for Jordan Times in the eighties and his "Straight Talk" column did antagonise the government on many occasions.

I cannot think of better news for freedom of information than Dr. Muasher's pledge to end his ministry at some point along the line. To the credit of the new government, this stance on the elimination of the information bureaucracy comes as the most vivid example of the white revolution that Mr. Kabariti has been entrusted with to execute.

There is hardly one modern and democractic country in the whole world that has an information portfolio in the executive branch of government. This does not mean that the state would not have any information campaign. Quite the opposite.

Democratically run governments would still need an apparatus to explain their views and defend their causes. What such governments do not need is a cumbersome bureaucracy that aims to control mass media and exercise some sort of monopoly or hegemony over it. This in turn calls for a sophisticated free mass media manned by real professionals.

No doubt the new Minister of Information has this concern in mind and would not wish to walk that extra mile until the other side walks an equal distance to meet the genuine and legitimate concerns of the public.

The real test, though, about the depth of the seriousness of the new government about its white revolution programme would come when the judiciary branch of government becomes due for an overhaul from head to toe.

The selection and appointment of judges is certainly an issue that calls for a fresh start in order to ensure the independence of the judiciary. We must look around and see how democratic nations chose their judges and perhaps adopt their ways. And whether we opt to have a constitutional court or not, the sticking point remains the jurisdiction of the current high courts of the land to rule on the constitutionality of certain legislations or practices.

The current archaic ways of the court system certainly calls for drastic remedial actions, including the introduction of computers and electronics.

Trial transcripts are still taken in the same way that was used during the Ottoman rule! So many ministers of justice vowed to change the system but none succeeded in doing so even though the price would be cost-effective and minimal.

Of course on the top of the national agenda remains the controversial draft election law. Much has been written on the subject as it stirred public outcries everywhere. The country is watching closely how Mr. Kabariti is going to deal with this thorny subject.

If the new government succeeds in introducing sensible amendments to it, it would succeed in enjoying a wider public support.

I would really recommend that a selected committee composed of people from the Cabinet, academia, professional associations, journalists and the business community be formed to review this legislation. The proposed election law could be the litmus test by which Jordanians would test the white revolution that has become the hallmark of the Kabariti government.

Declaring war on war itself

By Joseph Rotblat

Here then is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable. Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?

THIS WAS the question posed in 1955 in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. It was not a rhetorical question. It was put at that time because of the realisation that, with the development of the hydrogen bomb and ballistic missiles, human beings became an endangered species.

The extinction of the human race could result from a natural event, for example a collision with a comet or meteorite or an exceptionally violent volcanic eruption. Such a phenomenon was probably responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. But the fact that this cataclysmic disaster occurred some 60 million years ago, and none of such magnitude has apparently happened since, means that for all practical purposes we can put it out of our minds.

That such a catastrophe could be caused by the action of man was never considered seriously. History is full of attempted genoice. The gravest occurred this century: the Nazi programme of systematic elimination of whole categories of people, for no other reason than they were members of certain races. But there were no technical means for omnicide. The advent of nuclear weapons has changed all this.

The chief characteristic of the nuclear age is that, for the first time in history, man has acquired the technical capacity to destroy his own species, and to accomplish it, wilfully or accidentally, in a single action. The enormous significance of this situation is yet to sink in, it seems. We continue with our squabbles, which often lead to war, ignoring the danger that minor disputes may escalate into large hostilities, and eventually to a nuclear confrontation with catastrophic consequences.

Back in the fifties, the superpowers responded to the question in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, not by renouncing war but by trying to make it impossible through the policy of "mutually assured destruction."

It is widely believed that deterrence worked; it appears to many to have brought stability during the cold-war period. But this is a grand illusion. There was no military stability; what we did have was a furious arms race. At no time was either of the superpowers satisfied with what it had in its arsenal. Throughout the period, scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain kept on inventing new gadgets to make their own weapons more effective and those of the enemy more vulnerable. The result was an obscene accumulation of weapons: at one time reaching 70,000 nuclear warheads, 100 times more than was needed for deterrence. Even this was not enough to ensure security, and Ronald Reagan felt obliged to embark on the Star Wars project, a defensive umbrella which would have led to more offensive weapons being deployed.

There was an even chance, in many opinion, that a hardline leader would resort to the use of nuclear weapons in a desperate move to end the conflict. Fortuantely, a sane man came on to the scene: Mikhail Gorbachev — influenced in part by the debates in Pugwash meetings — called a halt to the arms race, and saved civilisation.

At present the danger of a nuclear confrontation is greatly reduced, but it is still there. The nuclear states still adhere to the deterrence policy, which is bound to lead to more countries seeking the security which the United Kingdom and others say that the possession of nuclear weapons provides.

The only way to prevent this is to get rid of all nuclear weapons. There is indeed a growing realisation among the general public, as well as political and military leaders, of the need to create a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The initiative of the Australian government to set up the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is evidence of this trend. Paul Keating announced the commission last November, as the first serious study of its type directly supported by a government. It deserves the support of the British government.

Should these efforts succeed in bringing about a treaty to outlaw the possession of nuclear weapons, the world would be a safer place, but not completely safe. The knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons cannot be erased. Even in a nuclear-weapon-free world, should the great powers become involved in a military confrontation, they would be tempted to rebuild nuclear arsenals. Moreover, other means of wholesale destruction may emerge from science. The human species will never be safe again, and we come back to the alternatives in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto: the end of the human race or renunciation of war. Since the first is unacceptable, war must cease to be an admissible social institution. The abolition of all war must be our ultimate goal.

To abolish war we need to create a new mind-set. We have to convey to the peoples of the world the message that the safeguarding of our common property — humankind — calls for developing in each of us a new loyalty, a loyalty to mankind.

Interestingly, the practical means for this are provided by science itself. The fantastic progress of science and technology has made this globe very small. We have all become close neighbours. Thanks to the tremendous growth of air travel, an ever-increasing number of people from different countries meet each other. The development of satellite communications enables each of us to know instantly what is going on in any part of the world. By the use of computer network systems we can talk to each other; further advances in computer technology will overcome the language barrier. All of us, all inhabitants of the globe, are becoming like one family. But we still have to recognise this fact consciously and acquire a loyalty to mankind.

Loyalty to a group is an essential element in civilisation. A group, in which individual members fulfil specialised tasks, has a much better chance of achieving prosperity and security than if each individual fends for himself. It is in the interest of all members of the group to work in unison. Hence, loyalty to the group is essential. In the early history of civilisation the group was small, a family, but gradually — with increasing specialisation — a number of such groups combined, linked by some common characteristic; new loyalties were superimposed on the original ones, an extension rather than a replacement of previous loyalties.

With increasing interdependence of people, largely arising from technological advances, ever larger groups evolved, leading to the nation. This is where it has got so far. Loyalty to one's nation is at present supreme, overriding the loyalties to other groupings. But now, when the whole of mankind needs protection, we have to extend loyalty beyond the nation.

At a time when the action of a single nation may endanger the whole of civilisation, it is imperative to develop, and recognise consciously, even formally, loyalty to the whole of mankind. We must learn to think of ourselves as citizens of the world. The survival of humankind can no longer be taken for granted. It should be our conscious goal as we approach the new millennium.

Professor Joseph Rotblat won the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs to abolish nuclear weapons. The article is reprinted from the Guardian.

Post-Palestinian elections; all eyes are on the council

THE PALESTINIAN elections of last month gave Mr. Yasser Arafat's Palestinian entity and his government, not to mention the Oslo accords, legitimacy. They also have the potential of granting the Palestinian people a mechanism through which they can be represented and heard. The large turn-out at the ballot box was unexpected but not surprising. It reflects the desire of the Palestinians to regain a voice after decades of being muted, and to be active participants in decisions that have the power to alter their lives. As the elections have become an event of the past, all eyes are expectantly glued to the council, in eager anticipation for the convening of its first session.

The electoral process was far from perfect. Imposed with its shackles by Israel, it was fraught with constraints- giving birth to a warped form of democracy. (True democracy is impossible in the absence of sovereignty). In addition, the elections were not immune to heavy criticisms o violations and calls for the recounting of votes, nor were they bereft of Israeli intimidatory practices prior and during the elections. The Israeli government didn't fail to use every trick in the book to place hurdles in front of the Palestinian electorate and candidates. Some candidates can be accused of not playing entirely by the rules while campaigning, and numerous speculations abound concerning the actual percentage of votes received by others. Nonetheless, the Palestinians have voiced their unwavering enthusiasm for elections, and the desire to shed years of occupation. And by participating in those particular elections they have, wittingly or unwittingly, placed their weight behind Oslo.

The make-up of the council is important, but not crucial, in determining its effectiveness and the extent of its authority. That had already been predetermined by the very process that gave it birth. Fateh has ensured control of 75 per cent of the council, with the success of 51 members who had run as official Fateh candidates, and an additional 15 who had run as independents but closely associated with Fateh. Although some of the opposition groups, notably Hamas, chose to officially boycott the elections, their silent support of some candidates ensured their success. Nine candidates closely associated with the Islamist opposition are now on the council. There is an additional 11 truly independent members. Although few in number, opposition blocs can develop within the council, countering the weight of Fateh.

A closer look at the members of the elected council reveal further insights into the expectations of the Palestinians from their representatives. Three distinct blocs made it to the council. Almost all the leadership that had been on the "outside" were elected. It is they who forged Oslo, for better or worst, and it is they who must see it through. Second, a large number of the "intifada" leadership was successful. The intifada was a crucial period in the Palestinian struggle, and weighs heavily on their psyche. Finally, highly respected independents are on the council, carried through by the weight of their credentials: an indication that a new breed of leadership is sought.

The council is up against a challenge. Now that the campaign slogans reiterating what the electorate wants to hear can be put aside, the council has to attend to the task for which it has been elected. It will give its seal of approval to the Oslo accords, and then address the day-to-day problems confronting the people ranging from social to economic issues. It will pursue the final status negotiations with the Israelis, and draft the Palestinian Basic Law.

Now that the newly elected 88-member Legislative council has been granted the Palestinians' vote of confidence, it must prove itself. But the council has one hand tied behind its back. The Oslo process that facilitated the birth of the council, through some semblance of democracy, has imposed on it numerous restrictions, hindering its manoeuvrability in addressing key issues. The final status negotiations are at stake and the council will be held hostage to Israeli intimidation to approve numerous compromises.

While some of the losing candidates are crying foul, unhappy with the results, it is clear that the Palestinians have cast their votes in favour of the principle of pursuing a democratic path, the flaws of the last elections notwithstanding. The performance of both the president and the council, in the months to come, will be subject to the same constraints that were dictated by the very process that gave them legitimacy. The council's performance will not be dictated so much by its relationship with the executive, but will be directed by the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, where Israel holds the upper hand. The council will not be judged by whether it is accountable to the people who elected it, but to the process which fathered it. Then it will be the Palestinian people who will cry foul.

Farida Salfiti is Managing Editor of Paris-based Issues magazine. She contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Fifty years on, first electronic computer celebrated

By Randall Mikkelsen
Reuter

PHILADELPHIA — On Valentine's Day in 1946, a U.S. Army general stood before a dining hall full of dignitaries and engineers at the University of Pennsylvania, pushed a button and launched the computer era.

The button pressed by Gen. Gladeon Barnes initiated the first public demonstration on Feb. 14, 1946 of a 30-tonne behemoth of black steel, vacuum tubes and wire now recognised as the world's first all-electronic, general-purpose computer.

"That was the first event (of the information age)," said Herman Goldstine, one of the last surviving members of the team that developed the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC). "It convinced the public that the machine was operable and (told) the scientific community that we would be glad to have them make use of it," he told Reuters.

This Valentine's Day the university will run ENIAC again, for the first time in four decades, as it kicks off a year-long commemoration of the start of the computer era. ENIAC will blink, whir and run through mathematical calculations at its revival demonstration at Penn's Moore School of Engineering, where it was developed.

The revival was permitted on a one-time-only basis by the Smithsonian Institution, which owns ENIAC. Actually, only a portion of the original machine will be run much of the rest was cannibalised for parts or scrapped years ago.

The Association For Computing Machinery, the oldest computer professional organisation, will be joining the university in sponsoring events to recognise the last 50 years of progress in computing. Among them are a series of chess matches on Feb. 10-17 pitting World Chess Federation champion Garry Kasparov against an IBM computer specially built for the purpose, the issuance of a commemorative U.S. postage stamp and a 10-month series of lectures on the impact of computing.

In addition, Penn scientists are developing a computer chip small enough to fit on a fingertip that replicates all the electronic functions of ENIAC, which took up a room 10 by 16 metres.

"It's not only a celebration of the past — what these people did — but also to take a real hard look at what the future will bring," said Penn spokeswoman Barbara Beck.

The original ENIAC had 17,468 vacuum tubes and cost $450,000. It could store 20 10-digit numbers in its electronic memory and process them at speeds of 100 kilohertz per second.

In contrast, modern personal computers, which cost less than $3,000, typically have 8-16 million characters of memory and can process up to 1,600 times faster, or 160 megahertz.

ENIAC was developed in a three-year rush to find a way for the army to calculate complex artillery trajectory tables needed to shoot down new fast-moving warplanes. Besides Mr. Goldstine, an army mathematician who helped sell the military on the project and served as a liason for the army, other members of the team included physicist John Mauchly and Engineer J. Prosper Eckert.

Mauchly was credited with conceiving the machine's electronic design and eckert with solving the challenge of making thousands of temperamental vacuum tubes operate resonably reliably.

Mr. Goldstine's wife Adele, who helped programme the computer and wrote the operating manual for it, was one of several women at the university who also took part in building ENIAC.

Although World War II had ended by the time ENIAC was first powered up, the machine's potential was immediately apparent to at least some observers.

"Leaders who saw the device in action for the first time heralded it as a tool with which to begin to rebuild scientific affairs on new foundations," the New York Times reported after the 1946 Valentine's Day demonstration.

ENIAC followed a long history of development in computing machines, going back to Charles Babbage's "difference engine" designed in the early 1800s, and no patent was ever awarded for it. Later computers were developed with "stored memory" programmes, offering much greater versatility and ease of use.

The significance of ENIAC was that it was the first all-electronic machine and it could be used for a wide variety of calculations, unlike its predecessors. But much as Christopher Columbus's voyages, while not the first by a European to the new world, paved the way for its conquest, ENIAC led to all that followed in computing.

"It opened the door," said Paul Shaffer, curator of the ENIAC Museum at Penn. "It (the computer era) just took off and never came back."

Bosnian refugees use memory to seek the missing

By Davor Huic
Reuter

TUZLA, Bosnia — Fikreta Halilovic has etched into her memory every tiny detail, face and name from the days last July when the Serbs overran Srebrenica and her life collapsed.

For what she did not see with her own eyes she relies on the collective memory of thousands of other Bosnian Muslim refugees, a vast human database created by the network of Srebrenica survivors.

They spend their days telling their stories and listening to each other's, trying to reconstruct their ordeal down to the most miniscule detail in a search for clues to the fate of thousands of missing men.

On July 11 the U.N.-protected "safe haven" of Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave in eastern Bosnia, was taken by Serbs.

Some 10,000 defenders attempted to break through the woods to government-held territory, but only half ever emerged. Suryivors believe most of the others were killed in ambushes or captured and executed by the Bosnian Serb forces.

The women took shelter in the U.N. camp at Potocari with some 3,000 men. When the Serbs came, the men were separated and have not been seen since. The women were driven in buses to government territory at Kladanj, south of Tuzla, in the biggest single exodus of the Bosnian war.

"My husband was last seen on July 13, standing in a bus full of men that went in the direction of Bratunac. Twelve women saw him," said Halilovic, who looks older than her 32 years.

Her face is deeply wrinkled, a testimony to the months of stress she has suffered, tossed between hope that her husband Samir is still alive, and the harrowing thought he might never see their four-month-old daughter, born in exile.

Mujesira Salihovic (right) shouts at Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic during a meeting between the president and the widows of Srebrenica Feb. 10. Ms. Salihovic, who lost family in Srebrenica, demanded that something be done over the reported massacres in the area and whereabouts of thousands of people (Reuters photo)

Halilovic and the other women of Srebrenica — thousands of mothers and sisters, wives and lovers, aunts and grandmothers — live in a relentless search for that extra clue.

"My son was seen on television cleaning the streets in Srebrenica," said a mother whose hope was vindicated when a western television crew caught her son by chance in a panorama shot of the deserted town, now in Serb hands.

Fikreta's sister-in-law, Fatima said she recognised in similar footage a man dumping garbage in a container in Srebrenica as a pre-war neighbour. "He wore the same jeans jacket he had on when I last saw him in the Potocari camp."

Three years of life in a besieged enclave, its traumatic fall and the months of uncertainty that followed have locked the Srebrenica survivors into a closed group.

They are bound by shared experience and an incredible ability to keep in their heads thousands of names, faces and place-names, stories, details of situations and a complete geography of eastern Bosnia.

They may be scattered in towns and villages all around Tuzla region, yet some 30,000 Srebrenica refugees form a tightly connected society.

It is an invisible network of minds striving collectively to reproduce what exactly happened during those few summer days after the fall of their town.

"(Bosnian Serb General Ratko) Mladic personally separated and took my men away from Potocari," said a short, round woman in loose pantaloons and a colourful head scarf.

"My man and son were last seen in Baljkovica," said another, referring to a wooded mountain area where the Serbs set up the biggest ambush to block the column of fighters fleeing the town and break it into smaller groups.

These hunted bands wandered through the woods for days and weeks, living off apples, mushrooms and snails, occasionally bumping into one another and into the mass graves and dead bodies that littered the few routes through the mountains.

Every new survivor or released prisoner is a valuable source of information whose story becomes common knowledge within hours of their arrival in Tuzla.

I was once looking for a Srebrenica refugee who had some information about an unknown prison camp at Sase, a lead and zinc mine near Srebrenica, where the Serbs allegedly still keep some of the 8,000 missing Srebrenica men.

He was said to be called Haris, to be from posevar — a village near Srebrenica — and living in the village of Devetak near Tuzla, after being released from the Sase camp a few days ago. I had no address and no last name.

After a few hours search I managed to track him down. It turned out that virtually all the details I had were wrong, but the survivors' network still put me in touch with the man I was seeking where a computer would have failed miserably.

Fatima summed it all up: "Many of our men are dead, we know it, but not all of them. There is plenty of evidence that some are still alive, and each of us hopes that her husband, father, brother is among them, alive."

Britain's secret service wins new lease of life

By Helen Smith
Reuter

LONDON — British secret agents are highly experienced, armed with state of the art surveillance devices — and underemployed.

Left short of work by the end of the cold war and a ceasefire in Northern Ireland, Britain's MI5 has welcomed a new remit to tackle organised crime, believing it gives the counter espionage agency another purpose in life.

A bill on its way through parliament to extend MI5's powers looks almost certain to become law. The government says it needs a new strategy to fight organised crime, which has brought drug-driven gun battles to British cities.

"We would do well to remember that the greatest infringement of human rights in our society comes from the bullets, the knives and the drugs which are the stock in trade of the criminals against whom this bill is aimed," said Britain's Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Michael Howard.

But the bill has many critics who worry about giving the shadowy MI5 greater powers without making it more accountable.

Police are also worried that agents trained in the ways of espionage will not follow strict procedures on evidence gathering and treatment of witnesses.

Opponents wonder why the Conservative government is so eager to find a new role for MI5, and allowing it to expand, when other public bodies are being forced to shave budgets.

"Is not the background to this the fact that the security service is running out of threats, and that a new one is having to be invented to save large public spending cuts," said opposition Labour MP Chris Mullins in a debate on the bill.

Civil rights groups say it is impossible to make a secret service fully accountable and want MI5 abolished.

"Having a secret police force will lead to more miscarriages of justice," said John Wadham from the campaign group liberty.

MI5 is gradually shedding its secrecy. Founded in 1909, its existence was only officially acknowledged in the late 1980s.

On the rare occasions MI5 agents have given evidence in court they have done so from behind screens and without giving their names. Once identified, they are of little use as spies.

In an unprecendented move in 1991, MI5 announced that Stella Rimington was to be its new chief — previously, it was illegal for anyone to publish so much as the name of the agency's head.

And in 1993, MI5 published a brochure telling the public about its work.

It was all part of a grand survival plan in the post-cold war era which resulted in MI5 winning the contract to fight Northern Irish terrorism on mainland Britain.

But now guerrillas from both sides of the Irish conflict have declared a truce, leaving mi5 with its 2,000 staff, an annual budget of 150 million pounds ($226.6 million) and desperately in search of business.

Late last year, in another sign of glasnost, the agency placed newspaper advertisements for new recruits in anticipation of the new remit to tackle organised crime.

The service used to find its staff through Britain's top universities — promising students used to be summoned to interviews at an inconspicuous building in central London and asked if they wanted to work for the government.

Only if they reached a second interview would they learn which government body they were being considered for, said Rupert Allason, an expert on the security services and spy writer under the pen name Nigel West.

The agency has in the past recruited agents by placing newspaper advertisements for secretaries. Young women expecting to find themselves in a typing pool were sometimes assigned to spying missions against foreign enemies.

MI5's most successful agent was just such a recruit who infiltrated the Communist Party and in 1938 uncovered a Soviet spy ring operating in Britain.

But bright-eyed young graduates picturing themselves as the next Martini-swigging James Bond are soon disappointed. Most of MI5's work is drudgery, says Mr. Allason.

"After two or three years of studying vanguard, Socialist challenge and class war (left wing magazines) they get pretty depressed and leave," he said.

In fact much of MI5's work mirrors activities already carried out by police who are ambivalent about their new comrades in the fight against crime.

Top police officers are still smarting from MI5's 1992 coup in snatching away their responsibility for fighting Northern Irish terrorism. They are demanding pledges that they will be the ones to give the orders in the war against organised crime.

They also want to make sure the agency is subject to the same stringent public accountability rules as they are.

"The transparency of the secret services must be clear," says Commissioner William Taylor of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Antarctic sea bed may hold secrets to climatic change on Earth

By Mark Trevelyan
Reuter

CAPE ROBERTS, Antarctica — Layers of rock below the sea bed of Antarctica may hold clues to tens of millions of years of climate change on Earth — but the frozen continent will not yield its secrets lightly.

Fragile sea ice and temperatures as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius (-40 Fahrenheit) are among the hazards facing scientists from six countries in a New Zealand-led drilling project to extract a "core" of rock up to 100 million years old from under the sea.

They aim to find out whether ice sheets covered Antarctica more than 40 million years ago. By working out how periods of melting and freezing affected world sea levels, they hope to gain insights into the impact of current global warming.

"Can we understand better the linkage between sea level and climate and between the land, the atmosphere, the ocean and the ice sheets?" said Peter Barrett, a geologist at Victoria University in New Zealand.

"I don't think it will all be sorted out by this single project, of course, but I think this project is a fairly critical stepping stone. It's the way we have to go to really improve our documentation of the past."

Fossil finds, some dating back 200 million years, show that forests once grew in Antarctica and dinosaurs roamed the continent, which was joined to present-day Australia, Africa, south America and India in a super-continent known as Gondwana.

But Mr. Barrett says there is disagreement as to whether ice sheets covered Antarctica from time to time before 36 million years ago, when the continent grew much colder.

The scientists aim to find out by drilling down and looking for evidence of glaciation, where ice has ground down the rock and deposited a mixture of sand, stones and mud.

The logistics of the project are fiendishly difficult, but the first stage was successfully completed this month.

A New Zealand-Italian team unloaded 150 tonnes of drilling equipment, containerised laboratories and accommodation units and dragged it over 26 km of sea ice that was dangerously thin and cracked in places. Two bulldozers narrowly escaped disaster when a large chunk broke off alongside the supply ship Italica.

After storing the gear on land over the Antarctic winter, New Zealand engineers will return in September to dig it out from under the snow. They will haul it back onto the sea ice, locating the test sites by satellite.

Motorised toboggans will be sent as scouting parties to check the thickness of the ice and warn of cracks. Gaps of up to four metres can be spanned by a special pontoon bridge designed to carry the weight of a bulldozer.

Drilling is due to start in October, with teams working around the clock and scientists examining the rock core on site, at the nearby base camp and at a U.S. Antarctic laboratory to obtain the maximum amount of data while the samples are fresh.

Pitfalls are everywhere. What if a bulldozer falls through the ice? What if pipes burst in the special desalination plant that will suck up sea water and treat it for drinking and washing? What if the drill motor breaks down, for which there is no spare?

"There are Achilles heels all the way along," project Manager Jim Cowie admitted in an interview at Cape Roberts, a stunning location with views of giant tabular icebergs and the jagged transantarctic mountains.

"That's the nature of operating in Antarctica — we just call it the Antarctic factor. The best-laid plans can just be split asunder by the very nature of this environment.It's so changeable and one has to bear in mind safety all the time."

The $5.2 million project, involving New Zealand, the United States, Italy, Germany, Britain and Australia, is being seen as a model of international scientific cooperation and environmental awareness in Antarctica.

Mr. Cowie said the base camp for up to 40 people will be set up on the sea ice to avoid any risk of spills or damage on Cape Roberts itself, a nesting site for skuas.

"Among the Antarctic community, there are a lot of people looking on to see how close we come to getting it right."

Central Bank determined to restore local confidence in Jordanian dinar

By Jack Redden
Reuter

AMMAN (R) — Seven years after the Jordanian dinar plummeted in value, the Central Bank is still waging a costly battle to restore local confidence in the national currency.

"The Central Bank will continue to march on the same path," new Governor Ziyad Fariz said on taking over the top bank post in January.

That "path," for better or worse, is ensuring there is no repeat of the 1988-89 dinar crisis. The bank states bluntly that monetary stability is the key goal in managing the economy.

Last November, after one of periodic bouts of devaluation rumours, the central bank struct back by fixing the exchange rate at 0.708 dinars to a dollar and saying this would be maintained indefinitely.

Instead of fluctuating against a basket of currencies as before, the dinar rate against other currencies is set by their rates versus the dollar.

The bank had already shown its determination to maintain the value of the dinar, driving up interest rates on dinar deposits to encourage Jordanians to keep savings in dinars instead of dollars.

Savings in dinars now attract interest rates about five percentage points higher than dollars — a differential bank officials say will be maintained until Jordanians switch to dinars.

"People should be more secure," Wasef Azar, managing director of Business Bank, said of steps to protect the dinar. "But they are still doubting. People come and ask me: 'how long will the dinar stand?'"

The government has a formidable psychological problem to overcome. The dinar was worth $3 in May 1988. Sixteen months later, after stabilisation plans and pledges of no devaluation, it was trading at $1.20.

The spectre of a repeat of that period, when Jordanians saw the value of the dinar savings disappearing, has ensured that rumours of an impending devaluation sweep the market every few months.

A foreign expert said Jordanians saw dollar holdings an "insurance" against another unpleasant surprise. They hold about $2 billion of the U.S. currency in Jordanian banks and an unknown amount abroad.

Jordan also has the complication that about a third of dinars in circulation are held by Palestinians in the West Bank and could be switched into dollars at short notice. The government has sought guarantees of international help if that happens.

The cost of the Central Bank's policy to protect the dinar has been high for Jordanian business. A construction loan is likely to carry up to 15 per cent interest.

Investors hoping to build hotels at the Dead Sea had to recalculate business plans to account for higher costs, one diplomat said. The projects, expected to be signed months ago, are at a standstill as the government and investors argue terms.

Participants in Amman Financial Market, Jordan's stock market, complain continually about lack of liquidity because high interest rates are diverting investment into bank deposits.

Understandably, that has produced widespread grumbling against the bank and questions about whether the dinar is overvalued.

However, the consensus among bankers, foreign experts and the government — despite doubts in the private sector about figures showing inflation about four per cent — is that the dinar is fairly valued and is likely to be stable at least for the near term.

Certainly the bank, with international backing, is prepared to defend it.

"It's a real preoccupation," said a Western financial expert. "Psychologically it's important to the business community, and therefore to the government, that dinar is stable."

The International Monetary Fund said Friday it had approved a $295 million, three-year loan to help Jordan cash in on economic opportunities provided by peace in the Middle East.

That will help the government as it tries to raise reserves from less than $700 million to $1 billion — equal to the cost of three months' imports.

But the Central Bank's key weapon is the high interest rate differential for those willing to back the dinar against the dollar.

Financial experts outside the Central Bank are sceptical Jordanians will abandon the safety of dollars for the dinar. But Central Bank officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, say their latest figures show that money is finally starting to flow from the dollar to dinar deposits.

And if it is not, they are prepared to keep up interest rates until it does. Eventually the dinar may fall, but the Central Bank thinks Jordanians cannot afford to forgo higher returns much longer while waiting for it to happen.

Jordan boosts exports by 27%

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The value of Jordan's exports in the first eleven months of the past year has increased by 27 per cent compared with figures of 1994 for the same period, while imports registered a new rise with 12.1 per cent for the same period, figures obtained from General Statistics Department indicated Sunday.

The figures, which were made available to the Jordan Times, showed also that the value of reexported goods has increased by 17.0 per cent compared with 1994 figures. It registered JD 213.2 million ($300.2 million) compared with JD 182.3 million ($256.7 million) in 1994.

Jordan's total exports reached JD 902.5 million ($1.3 billion) compared with JD 710.7 million ($1.0 billion) in 1994. Iraq, the Kingdom's major trade partner received the lion's share of Jordan's exports with JD 171.8 million ($241.9 million) in 1995 compared with JD 93.8 million ($132.1 million) in 1994.

India came second with JD 109 million ($153.7 million) compared with JD 84.0 million ($118.3 million) in 1994. Saudi came third with JD 58.4 million ($82.2 million) compared with JD 64.6 million ($91.0 million) in 1994, followed with the United Arab Emirates with JD 39.2 million ($55.1 million) compared with JD 36.4 million ($51.2 million) in 1994.

Exports to Syria amounted to JD 35.2 million ($49.6 million) compared with JD 23.9 million ($33.5 million) in 1994, to Lebanon JD 21.2 million ($29.8 million) compared with JD 15.2 million ($21.4 million) and to Iran JD 19.1 million ($26.8 million) compared with JD 4.4 million ($6.0 million) in 1994.

Italy was the Kingdom's largest trade partner in the European continent with JD 17.5 million ($24.6 million) compared with JD 8.6 million ($12.1 million) in 1994.

The Kingdom's total imports in 1995 reached JD 2.4 billion ($3.4 billion) compared with JD 2.1 billion ($30 billion) in 1994. Iraq came first among the countries which exported goods to the Kingdom with JD 288.2 million ($405.9 million) compared with JD 262.6 million ($369.9 million) in 1994, followed by the United States with JD 229.9 million ($323.3 million) compared with JD 207.8 million ($292.6 million) in 1994.

Italy came next with JD 125.9 ($177.4 million) compared with JD 126.1 million ($177.5 million) in 1994 followed by the U.K. with goods worth JD 115.2 million ($156.2 million) in 1994.

Imports from Japan amounted to JD 84.7 million ($119.2 million) compared with JD 85.8 million ($120.8 million) in 1994, from Turkey JD 84.3 million ($118.7 million) compared with JD 58.0 million ($81.7 million) in 1994 and from Saudi Arabia JD 82.9 million ($116.8 million compared with JD 63.4 million ($89.2 million) in 1994.

Among the major goods the Kingdom exported were phosphate, valued at JD 94.4 ($132.9 million) compared with JD 89.3 million ($125.7 million) in 1994, potash valued JD 107.9 million ($151.9 million) compared with JD 80.7 million ($113.7 million) in 1994.

'95 was record year for Egyptian tourism

CAIRO (R) — The number of visitors to Egypt hit a historic high in 1995, at 3.205 million compared wtih 2.583 million in 1994, according to figures available Sunday.

The total for the year beat the previous record of about 3.1 million set in 1992.

The number of nights visitors spent in Egypt rose even more sharply, to 20.517 millino against 15.431 million in 1994, the figures from the Cabinet Office showed.

Tourism industry sources attributed the boom to economic growth in Europe, the main source of tourists, and a decline in the number of attacks on tourists by militants.

Estimates of revenue from tourism were not available after the month of August 1995, but in the first eight months of last year the industry brought in $790 million, compared with $935 million in the same period of the previous year.

But the most dramatic increases in number of visitors were concentrated in the last four months of 1995, which saw 41 per cent growth over the same period of 1994.

The industry's ability to bounce back from the problems of 1993 and 1994 has encouraged substantial investment in the sector, especially in the sun-and-sand resorts in the Sinai Peninsula and on the Red Sea coast.

Abu Dhabi seeks greater shipping status

ABU DHABI (R) — Oil-rich Abu Dhabi is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in projects to become a regionala shipping hub by 2000, a seaport official said Sunday.

"We aim to become a hub and a key figure in the Gulf by the end of 1999" Abdullah Al Faheem, marketing and public relations director at the Abu Dhabi Seaport Authority, told Reuters.

Abu Dhabi possesses vast oil wealth but its shipping assets are dwarfed by those of Dubai, its bustling neighbour and partner in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) federation, which has become the region's reexport and trade centre.

Seaport officials say they are determined to boost the UAE capital's shipping status.

International companies are vying to win lucrative contracts under a 2.4 billion dirham ($654 million) plan to develop and expand Abu Dhabi's Port Zaid. Mr. Faheem declined to name the firms.

The packages will include a 900 million dirham new access channel to the Musafa mini-port to provide a smoother route for large vessels and container ships to a new harbour that will carry a 40-65 million dirham price tag.

"The new access channel will be tendered by the Seaport Authority and the project will start in 1997 and will be completed by 1999. We are trying to boost capacity," Mr. Faheem said.

"The new harbour will also be built and will start in November of 1996 and is due for completion in 1998," he added.

Mr. Faheem said the access channel to the Musafah industrial area is designed to provide an escape from big cargo traffic jams in Abu Dhabi.

Port Zaid said Saturday it handled 246,000 containers in 1995 — up 96 per cent on 1994.

Total goods traffic climbed by 65 per cent to 3.8 million tonnes and 2,078 vessels called on the port in 1995, up 19 per cent on the previous year.

Dubai Ports Authority said it handled a record 2.07 million containers in 1995 — up 10 per cent on 1994's 1.88 million.

Bankers warn against introducing exchange controls in economic crisis

TOKYO (AFP) — Introducing exchange controls is not an appropriate response to an economic crisis such as that seen in Mexico in December 1994, an international banking organisation said in a report.

"One of the dangers of capital controls is that they tend to scare people from investing," said the Institute for International Finance (IIF), which groups the major world banks.

IIF vice chairman William Rhodes of Citibank, presenting the report in Tokyo, said that once in place these controls are "difficult to repeat."

Charles Dallarra, former assistant secretary for international affairs at the U.S. Treasury and now managing director of IIF, added that in such situations it would be a "big mistake to conclude from Mexico's experience that it is necessary to install capital controls."

Organisation officials say the Mexican crisis was provoked by the "excessive dependence" of Mexico on foreign savings, together with faults in the country's economic policy.

Despite the turbulence caused by this crisis, the organisation welcomed the fact that the level fo private finance invested in developing countries remained stable last year at $175 billion.

Private money represented 80 per cent of funds moving into developing countries.

The IIF predicts that this flow shoudl remain stable in 1996 for the third consecutive year, again at about $175 billion.

Due to the decrease in public-sector contributions after the settlement of the Mexican crisis, private funds could represent 94 per cent of the money being invested in these countries. However, they are likely to be shared out differently.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"My parents vacationed at a nude beach! Mom was embarrassed, but most people mistook Dad for a large sea sponge."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LEELB

GUFED

HOWTRY

RIEVIL

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here :

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: JADED WEARY HOMAGE GARLIC
Answer: What the snowball fight turned into — A COLD WAR

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make a plan in the morning today which can gain your most important aims and then put it in motion after lunch for those aims to become a reality.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan how to get conditions improved so that you can have greater security for the days ahead, then put ideas to work and you will get your desires.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get into the outside world early today and improve your status considerably. Handle personal matters in the evening with your loved ones.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Early this morning be out to new places for whatever your interests happen to be and later this evening you can handle civic duties well.

LEO :(July 22 to August 21) Daytime is fine for keeping any promises you have made to others and later today you can enjoy amusements you like in the company of loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Reach a better understanding with a partner since in the afternoon today you can handle your end of the deal nicely to the satisfaction of all concerned.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get those tasks handled which are awaiting you in the morning today. Tonight be successful also in the social world with the assistance of knowledgeable individuals.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Romantic moments can be yours early in the day today, then get okay of close ties for whatever your purpose may be.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day today to do what you prefer at home and then you can be out for a fun evening with your mate. Budget money wisely so you do not fall short.

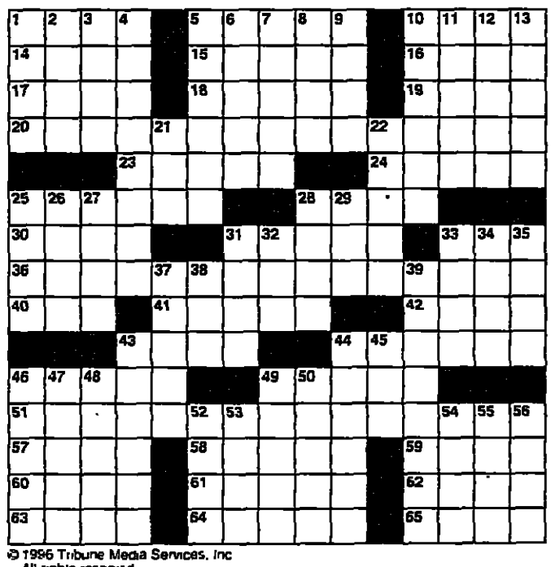
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You can take care of desk assignments nicely in the morning today and tonight you can be happy at home with close friends and loved ones.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Doing something early today to improve the looks of your home is wise in the morning. Later tonight, be with good friends for a good time.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Early today get ready to get into the activities you most like and then handle practical difficulties with wisdom and patience.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

THE Daily Crossword by Samuel K. Fliegner



ACROSS
1 Defect
5 Diving gear
10 Tiff
14 Zhivago's love
15 N.Y. island
16 El —, TX
17 Great amount
18 Small change
19 Sty sound
20 Legal authorization
23 Half-pints
24 Rocket type
25 Put on ice
28 Hooters
30 Yes — (choice words)
31 Sacred: pref.
33 Fashionable resort
36 Personally unattainable
40 Pandora's —
41 Incensed
42 False god
43 Charon's river
44 Batista successor
46 Moving
49 — of burden
51 Decision makers
57 Fiber plant
58 Cease, to a sailor
59 Spiral
60 Wine bottle
61 Carouse
62 Long and lean
63 Machine starter
64 Apiary resident
65 Advantage

DOWN
1 Commotion
2 French composer
3 In a line
4 Crushing defeat
5 Boxing match attendant
6 Fissure
7 Arm bones
8 Post on a ship
9 Helper: abbr.
10 Seed kin
11 Artist's need
12 "Lou Grant"
13 Where the Ginza is
21 Regret
22 Ship's lower deck
25 Baseball's Ty
26 Sandwich cookie
27 Chalcedony
28 Curved molding
29 Neighbor of Minn.
31 Deception
32 Opposite of syn.
33 Sharp blow
34 Seckel
35 Woody's son
37 Part of TNT
38 Uninteresting
39 Impediment
43 Crouton kin
44 Livestock
45 Residue
46 Dumas musketeer
47 Racing boat
48 Beat
49 Shout of approval
50 German city
52 Julia — Howe
53 Always
54 Natterjack
55 Cherry
56 Filmdom's Sommer

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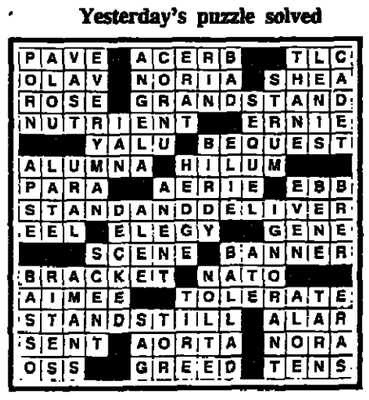
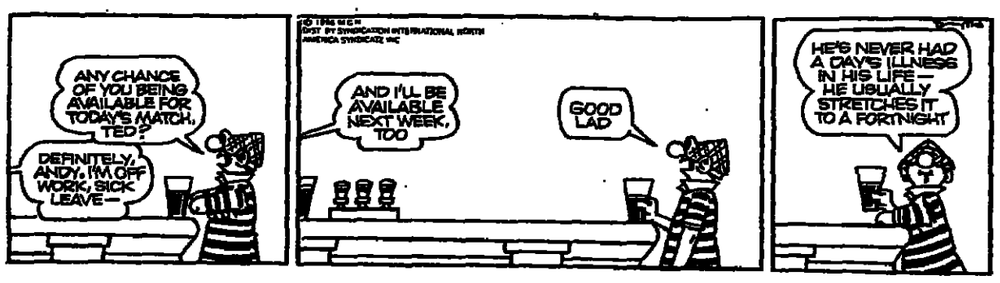
Yesterday's puzzle solved

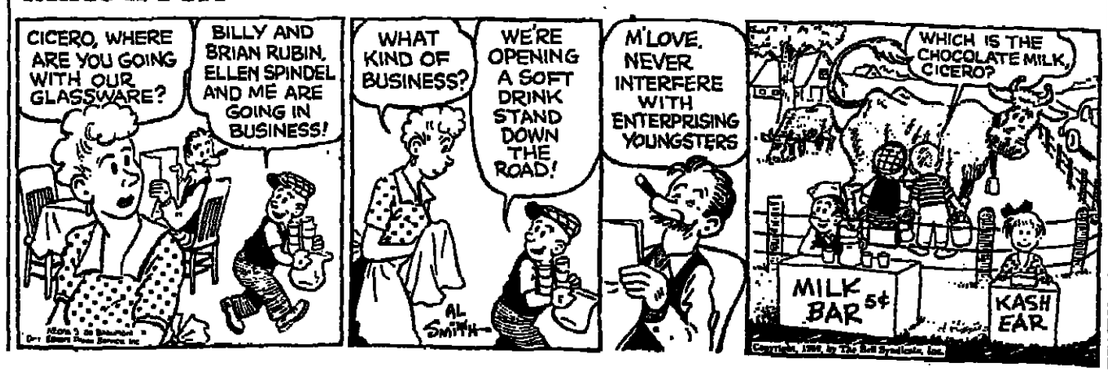


Peanuts

Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Central Bank of Jordan

The Central Bank of Jordan announces that, in conformity with the law of the Central Bank and the bylaw of the Issuance of Jordanian Currency No. (11) year 1995, a modified third issue JD 5 and JD 1/2 banknotes will be put in circulation as from Monday 12/2/1996.

The specifications of the new notes are completely the same as the notes currently in circulation, except for the following modifications:-

* The phrase "The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" in Arabic has been added to the front of the notes.
* The phrase " The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" in English has been added to the back.
* The dates (both the Hejira and Gregorian) in Arabic has been placed to the right of the dates in English on the back of the notes.

The modified notes will circulate alongside the existing notes and all shall remain in circulation as legal tender.

Jews attack Swiss banks' assessment of lost Jewish holdings

GENEVA (AFP) — Jewish organisations have attacked an assessment by Swiss banks that they were holding less than $30 million in unclaimed funds presumed deposited by Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

The Swiss Bankers Association (ASB) published the assessment Wednesday after its 400 members investigated accounts which were opened by foreigners before 1945 but had no known holders today.

The association said a total of 38.7 million Swiss francs ($32 million) was involved, including interest, of which 28.5 million francs were presumed to have belonged to Jews living in Germany or German-occupied territories during World War II.

Association official Jean-Paul Chapuis said the estimation of billions of dollars which had been aired in the press had no basis in reality.

But Avraham Burg, head of Israel's semi-governmental Jewish Agency, accused the Swiss banks of evading their moral responsibility to survivors of the Holocaust and their families, adding: "What have they to hide?"

"Fifty years after the event, we were expecting a little more sensitivity from the ASB and the Swiss government," Mr. Burg said.

The head of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman, also accused the Swiss banks of showing a lack of responsibility to Holocaust victims.

ASB spokeswoman Silvia Matile said the bankers were surprised at the reaction.

"We are aware of the tragic aspect of the past, we had a very acute sense of responsibility, and I cannot explain this violence of tone."

Mr. Bronfman and other Jewish officials had met the bankers last year along with Swiss President Kaspar Villiger in a new atmosphere after years of bitterness over Switzerland's wartime treatment of Jews.

Mr. Villiger had apologised for the period, when Swiss banks took care of gold seized by the Nazis and Swiss authorities closed the country's borders to Jewish refugees.

Last September an office was set up to track down unclaimed Jewish assets and their eventual rightful owners, which has so far received 323 claims.

"In some cases the applications clearly came from very old people, their letters were difficult to read, the necessary documentation was rarely provided, and the presumption of assets in Switzerland had only a vague basis," an official said.

Often, he said, it was more a matter of hope than certainty.

Rolf Block, head of the association of Swiss Jewish communities, acknowledged the problems, quoting a letter from a Bulgarian which gave only the vaguest of details.

Mr. Bloch expressed regret that the ASB's conclusions were released to the press first, saying the reported sum was "low." He hoped that unclaimed funds would be distributed among Jewish organisations by the Swiss banks, which had set up their anonymous numbered accounts precisely because Germany in the 1930s made depositing assets abroad an offence punishable by death.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI

TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179

ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 11/02/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	180	42120	234.000	234.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	5900	25790	4.380	4.380
BANK OF JORDAN	2820	10012	3.550	3.550
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	1603	4676	2.880	2.530
THE HOUSING BANK	2534	12777	5.070	5.040
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	1504	4161	2.780	2.770
JORDAN GULF BANK	2400	2473	1.030	1.030
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	1000	3820	3.620	3.620
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	11228	43789	3.910	3.890
BEIT ALMAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1954	5982	3.070	3.030
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	4180	3451	.840	.830
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	19400	26440	1.330	1.390
BANKS SECTOR	54870	185349	INDEX NUMBER: 184.74 CHANGE : +0.06%	
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	3250	9048	2.780	2.800
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	1400	3360	2.400	2.400
INSURANCE SECTOR	4650	12408	INDEX NUMBER: 139.32 CHANGE : +0.09%	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	33029	58470	1.770	1.770
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	2750	3900	1.430	1.400
JORDAN HIMMEH MINERAL	228	532	2.320	2.320
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	3100	8080	2.610	2.610
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	1838	3894	1.590	1.590
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRA'I	100	1030	10.750	10.300
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	4802	10320	2.150	2.150
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	4650	16270	3.460	3.500
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1550	1803	1.170	1.170
UNIVERSAL CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	86500	189680	2.250	2.240
SERVICES SECTOR	138029	292867	INDEX NUMBER: 126.62 CHANGE : +0.26%	
AITANQEEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	250	300	1.200	1.200
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	6674	24518	3.700	3.670
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	7690	25287	3.250	3.210
THE ARAB POTASH	1550	8863	5.670	5.730
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	30	298	9.930	9.930
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	200	1520	7.600	7.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	3500	15569	4.490	4.470
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	1300	8060	6.190	6.200
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	1000	2200	2.280	2.200
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	350	742	2.140	2.120
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	3628	26221	7.270	7.230
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	2200	13320	6.600	6.600
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	7150	3908	.550	.540
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1800	2574	1.440	1.430
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	500	815	1.630	1.630
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	7050	6980	.990	.990
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	500	713	1.450	1.420
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	700	700	.980	1.000
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3900	6304	1.630	1.620
PANTHER INVESTMENT	600	930	1.550	1.550
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	4500	13590	3.020	3.020
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	1650	3130	1.910	1.890
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	2750	3670	1.330	1.340
EL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	20664	50708	2.400	2.460
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	4500	6098	1.360	1.350
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	503	720	1.490	1.640
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	85350	226757	INDEX NUMBER: 124.37 CHANGE : +0.03%	
GRAND TOTAL	282899	717381	INDEX NUMBER: 159.63 CHANGE : +0.05%	

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 420670

VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 165487

Telecom industry moves off starting blocks with deregulation bill

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The telecommunications industry jumped off the starting blocks Thursday as President Bill Clinton signed a sweeping deregulation bill that opens up competition and breaks down most industry barriers.

The law ends monopolies in cable television and local telephone service, while freeing companies in the trillion dollar telecommunications industry to operate across geographic and industry boundaries.

AT and T and MCI Communications, which up to now have been restricted to long-distance telephone service, both said shortly after the signature they will begin offering local services now that the bill has become law.

"The gloves are off and we are now free to take on the monopolies head-on," said Nate Davis, chief operating officer for MCI's local service subsidiary, which said it would offer service in 24 cities this year.

"We're ready to play. We're ready to win," said Robert Allen, chairman of AT and T, whose near monopoly on national phone service was broken up a decade ago. Mr. Allen said that by March 1, AT and T will have taken the initial steps to provide local services in all 50 states.

British-based Cable and Wireless also said it would enter local telephone service in at least seven states.

Most of the so-called Baby Bells, or regional telephone companies formed from the 1984 breakup, said they plan begin entering the $70 billion long-distance market in competition with AT and T and MCI.

"We're going to announce the first step (into long-distance) next week," said James Cullen of Bell Atlantic.

"This (law) knocks down all the boundaries, so we're relatively free to compete, either immediately or going through a process of six to nine months," he added.

The bill, the result of months of squabbling among industries and politicians, is the first major overhaul of a 1934 law regulating communications.

The bill includes a hotly contested provision banning obscenity on the Internet — which is expected to face an immediate court challenge from civil libertarians.

It also requires manufacturers of television sets to include a "V-chip" that allows parents to block access to violent programming. Mr. Clinton said he would meet with broadcast representatives later this month in an effort to devise a TV rating system similar to one used for films.

The law additionally lifts many restrictions on broadcast ownership, increasing the limit on broadcasters to 35 per cent of the national market, up from 25 per cent.

It is expected to encourage further mergers and acquisitions such as those already concluded bringing together cable, broadcast, telephone and entertainment companies.

Some mega-mergers have already taken place in anticipation of the liberalisation, including Disney's $19 billion acquisition of Capital Cities/ABC, Time Warner's $7.5 billion deal with Turner Broadcasting and Westinghouse's $5.4 billion buyout of CBS.

"This is like going to the information rodeo. Just get your best grip and hang on," Barry Johnson, AT and T's regional director of corporate affairs, said last week.

BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Kalaldeh: 1,410 vessels docked at Aqaba port last year

☆☆ A TOTAL of 1,410 vessels, 60 of which were tourism ships carrying 10,000 tourists, docked at Aqaba last year, Captain Mohammad Kalaldeh, president of the Maritime Shipping Agents, has said. In 1994, only 34 tourism ships carrying 7,700 tourists, arrived at Aqaba. Captain Kalaldeh indicated that imports in transit unloaded at Aqaba amounted to 700,000 tonnes of grain, sugar and rice. The number of containers unloaded at Aqaba last year totalled 58,000 whereas the number of containers loaded for exports totalled 12,500. The president said that at the end of 1995 there was a total of 53 licensed companies operating as shipping agents compared with 46 companies at the end of 1994 (Al Ra'i).

Nuqul urges government to lower customs fees on imported frozen chicken

☆☆ ELIA NUQUL, president of the General Association of Foodstuff Traders, reminded the government of his warning last year that by hiking customs fees to 50 per cent on frozen chicken, importers would not be interested in importing this product and, as a result, there will be a shortage of chicken in the local market and prices will rise. Noting that such a situation is being witnessed in the market at present and that prices of chicken have risen as high JD 1.700 per kilogramme, Mr. Nuqul demanded that customs fees on imported frozen chicken be lowered to one per cent with a 20 per cent additional tax plus the slaughterhouse and veterinary charges. He explained that these rates were fair to protect local production and a good equation to protect the poor in the first place as well as maintaining the benefit of local poultry farmers. As such, he said, whenever there is a shortage of chicken meat, importes would step in to import sufficient quantities to plug the shortage gap.

Noting that the Ministry of Supply has stopped importing frozen chicken and that traders were refraining from importing this product due to high customs fees, Mr. Nuqul expects prices to rise even higher. He pointed to high demand, low supply of chicken due to weather conditions and high prices of red meat as other factors that will contribute to higher chicken prices (Al Aswaq).

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	Friday Feb.-2-1996 Close	Friday Feb.-9-1996 Close	Percent Change
Sterling Pound*	1.5245	1.5306	0.40 %
Deutsche Mark	1.4820	1.4760	0.41 %

* USD Per STG

Euro-Currency Interest Rates*

Currency	Feb.-2-1996 1-Month (%)	Feb.-2-1996 1-Year (%)	Feb.-9-1996 1-Month (%)	Feb.-9-1996 1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.25	4.93	5.18	4.90
Sterling Pound	6.21	6.00	6.25	6.00
Deutsche Mark	3.28	3.12	3.26	3.12
Swiss Franc	1.68	1.85	1.53	1.95
French Franc	4.20	4.30	4.16	4.35
Japanese Yen	0.33	0.55	0.38	0.58

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: February-11-1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7060	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0817	1.0871
Deutsche Mark	0.4789	0.4813
Swiss Franc	0.5858	0.5887
French Franc	0.1394	0.1401
Japanese Yen*	0.6610	0.6643
Dutch Guilder	0.4278	0.4299
Swedish Krona	-	-
Italian Lira*	0.0451	0.0453
Belgian Franc	-	-

* Per 100

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (February 5 -February 9, 1996)

AMMAN — The U.S. unit depreciated modestly against the mark and Sterling last week, while appreciating against the yen. It ended the week 0.40 per cent lower against Sterling, 0.41 per cent lower against the mark, and 0.51 per cent higher against the yen.

The dollar depreciated against other major currencies Monday, especially against the mark. The U.S. unit lost ground when it failed to stay above the 1.4850 marks support level during Asian and early European trading hours. Meanwhile, analysts indicated that the dollar should appreciate against the yen in coming weeks.

The U.S. unit continued its depreciation against the yen and sterling Tuesday, while appreciating against the mark. Reports indicated that bargain-hunters took the opportunity of lower dollar exchange rate against the mark to add to their long dollar positions, which lent support to the results had little impact on exchange rates as dealers were waiting for the ten and thirty years auction outcome the following day and Thursday, respectively.

The dollar rose against other major currencies Wednesday. Reports indicated that the dollar continued its appreciation that started in Tokyo earlier that day on news that the Bank of Japan intervened in the market and bought dollars. Reports also indicated that traders who liquidated their long dollar positions previously, came back and took new positions, which was cited as a factor that supported the dollar. A report showing that the U.S. international trade deficit had shrunk by 13.5 per cent in November to stand at $7.06 billion, failed to affect exchange rates.

The U.S. unit depreciated against other major currencies Thursday, however. Analysts indicated that news that the Japanese Finance Ministry took several steps to encourage foreign investments had little impact on the dollar-yen rates.

The dollar traded in narrow ranges against the mark and the yen, while appreciating against sterling. Analysts indicated that the dollar came under pressure when a Bundesbank official hinted that German interest rates may hold steady. Meanwhile, the dollar's rise against sterling was attributed to news of bomb blast in London. The news prompted many dealers to trim their long sterling positions and buy safe haven dollar.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4760 marks, 107.000 yen and at $1.5306 to the pound.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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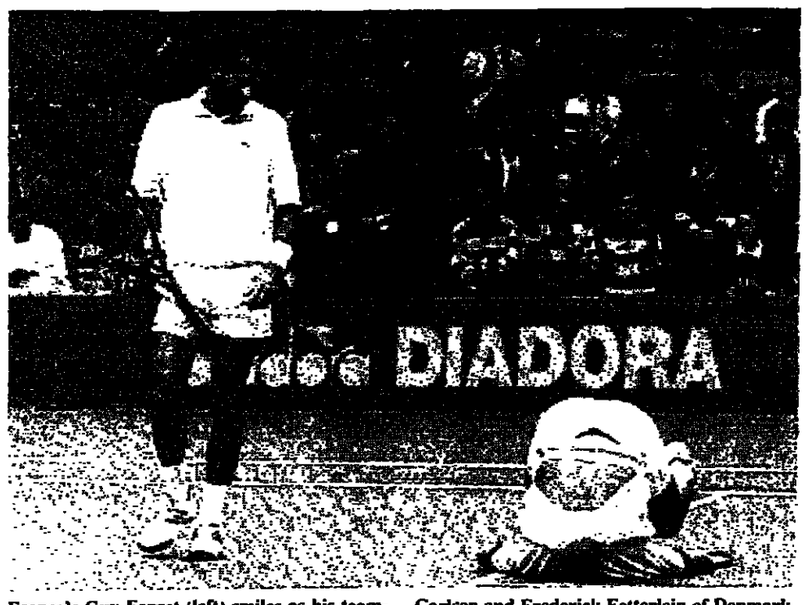
JORDAN MARKET PLACE



France's Guy Forget (left) smiles as his teammate Guillaume Raoux (right) jokes around on the court during their match against Kenneth Carlsen and Frederick Fetterlein of Denmark, during the France/Denmark Davis Cup tennis 1st leg in Besancon (Reuters photo)

U.S., Germany, Sweden advance in Davis Cup

LONDON (R) — The defending champions United States, Germany, Sweden and France, who have all won the Davis Cup in the 1990s, clinched places in the World Group quarter-finals on the second day of their first round ties on Saturday.

Patrick McEnroe and Patrick Galbraith put the United States up an unbeatable 3-0 in their best-of-five Davis Cup tie with Mexico by defeating Oscar Ortiz and Leonardo Lavelle 7-6 (9-7), 6-4, 6-3 in Carlsbad, California.

Victory in the doubles also saw the Czech Republic, 3-0 up against Hungary in Plzen, reach the last eight and a quarter-final clash with the Americans.

Cyril Suk and Daniel Vacek saved four match points in a third-set tie-break as they fought back to beat Gabor Koeves and Sandor Noszaly 6-7, 6-7, 7-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Germany, who won the final in 1993 for the third time in six years, meet 1991 winners France after competing a 3-0 rout of Switzerland in Geneva despite the absence of their injured top player Boris Becker.

The Germans made light of also having to do without Michael Stich in the singles to carry a 2-0 lead into the second day, on which Stich teamed up with Davis Prinosil for a 6-2, 7-5, 6-2 win over Jakob Hlasek and Alexandre Strambini, in for the injured Marc Rosset.

Guy Forget and Guillaume Raoux came from behind to beat Danish pair Kenneth Carlsen and Frederik Fetterlein 4-6, 6-3, 7-6, 6-3 in Besancon and secure a quarter-final berth for France.

Sweden, winners in 1994, cruised to an easy victory over Belgium in Katrineholm without dropping a set in three matches to date. Jonas Bjorkman and Niklas Kulti winning their first ever doubles together against Filip Dewolf and Dion Norman.

DAVIS CUP

"We won easily even without Stefan Edberg, but I know he will be available when we need him later on," said Sweden's non-playing captain Carl-Axel Hageskog.

The Swedes go on to meet the winners of the tie between India and the Netherlands in Jaipur where the Dutch went 2-1 up with Paul Haarhuis and Jacco Eltingh's 3-6, 6-2, 7-6, 6-4 win over Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi in the doubles.

Earlier on Saturday, Bhupathi completed a five-set win over Jan Siemernick to level the tie after their singles was carried over from Friday because of rain with the Indian 3-2 up in the deciding set.

Russia, losing finalists for the last two years, continued to have a tough time against an inspired underdog Italian team and trail 2-1 in their fight for a quarter-final berth against either Austria or south Africa.

Andrea Gaudenzi, who came from behind to beat Andrei Chesnokov in five sets in the opening singles on Friday, and Diego Nargiso won the doubles in another come-from-behind five-set victory.

Nargiso and Gaudenzi, preferred to Stefano Pescosolido at the last moment by captain Adriano Panatta, beat Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Andrei Olhovskiy 6-4, 2-6, 5-7, 7-6, 6-4.

Italy's unlikely hero was Nargiso, ranked 159th in the world. "Nargiso played incredibly well, much better than he usually does," world number six Kafelnikov said.

South Africa and Austria are locked 1-1 in Johannesburg after the doubles was stopped by rain with Wayne Ferreira and Gary Muller leading Thomas Muster and Alex Antonitsch 6-3, 7-6, 6-7, 1-2.

Premier League roundup

Wihdat maintain narrow lead

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — An interesting week awaits the Kingdom's soccer fans as the final round of the Premier League competition kicks off Tuesday and concludes Friday Feb. 16.

Following the results of the past week Al Wihdat maintained their lead with 45 points after their 2-1 win over Al Hussein.

Al Ramtha trail closely behind with 43 points after a 4-0 win over Al Ramtha and Al Faisali are third with 42 following a 4-0 win over last-placed Al Russeifa.

While Al Wihdat have the strongest chance to retain the title as they next face Al Baqaa who have already been relegated, Al Ramtha and Al Faisali also have slim chances only with a complicated set of possibilities that include Al Wihdat's defeat.

The other teams in the competition do not even have a chance for runner up position. Kufrsoum are now fourth after a 1-1 draw with Al Jalil while Al Qadissieh dropped to fifth after a 2-0 defeat to Al Jazireh who moved up to seventh.

Al Hussein, who had led the standings at the outset of the competition, now find themselves in eighth place after their loss to Al Wihdat.

Al Baqaa, Sahab, Al Jalil and Al Russeifa who dropped back to the first division do not have any incentive to play and that was apparent when only 7 Sahab players showed up for their match against Al Ramtha.

Standings after 21st week

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS
Wihdat	21	13	6	2	40	20	45
Ramtha	21	13	4	4	33	12	43
Faisali	21	12	6	3	41	12	42
Kufrsom	21	9	9	3	30	21	36
Qadissieh	21	10	5	6	37	23	35
Ahli	21	9	7	5	36	22	34
Jazireh	21	9	6	6	38	24	33
Hussein	21	8	7	6	36	19	31
Baqaa	21	6	3	12	30	49	21
Sahab	21	2	9	10	18	37	15
Jalil	21	2	4	15	28	63	10
Russeifa	21	—	—	21	15	86	—

Auxerre put the heat on PSG

PARIS (AFP) — Auxerre closed to within three points of French league leaders Paris St. Germain on Saturday with a 2-0 win over 10-man Lyon.

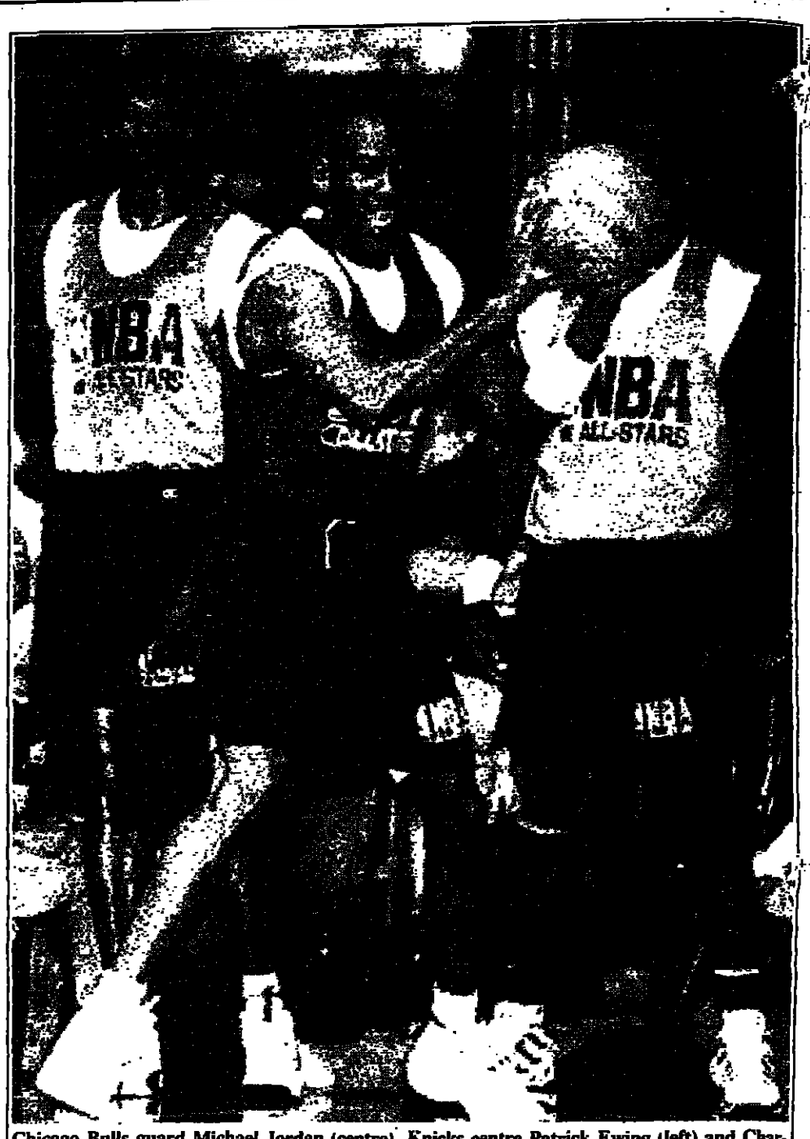
Christophe Cocard opened the scoring after 13 minutes and Lyon were down to 10 men soon afterwards when Florian Maurice was dismissed for a second bookable offence. Bernard Diomede sealed the victory in the 80th minute.

The three-point gap may be shortlived as PSG were due to play Montpellier on Sunday night. Third-placed Metz have meanwhile had their match with fourth-placed Monaco postponed because of the arctic weather conditions.

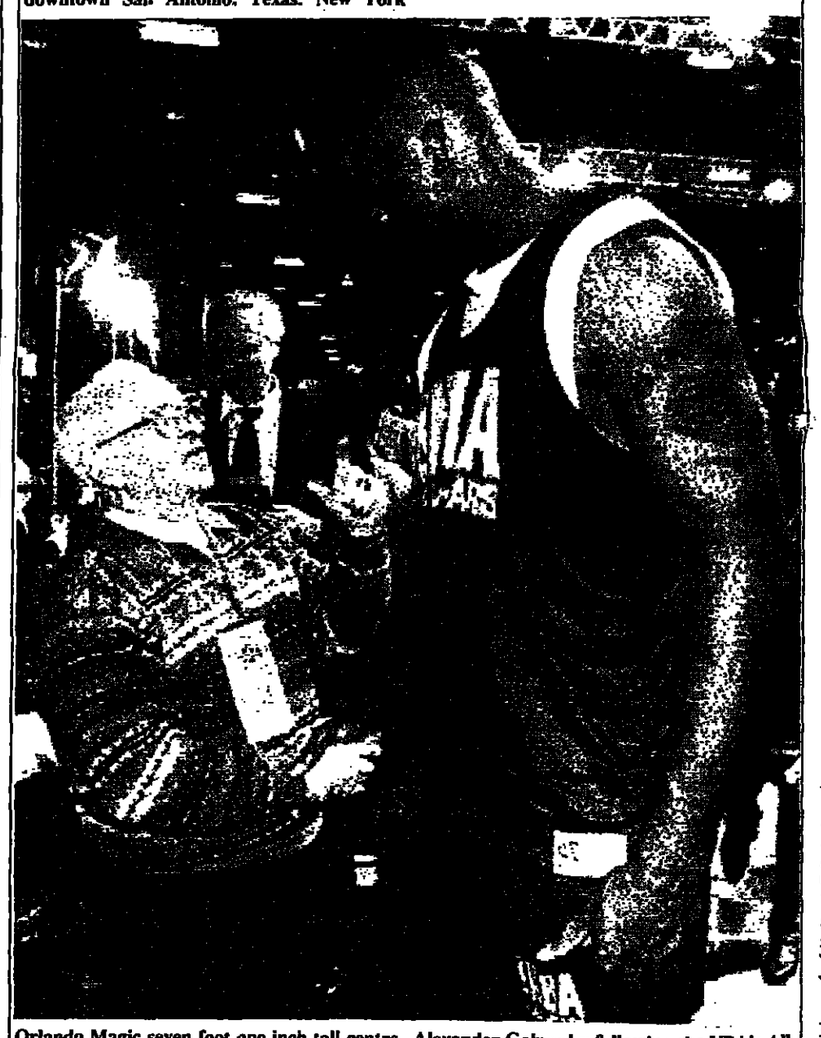
Reigning champions Nantes finished up being trounced 3-1 by newly-promoted Guingamp, despite having taken a 1-0 lead throug an own-goal and seen their goalkeeper Dominique Casagrande save a penalty from Xavier Gravelaine.

Alas, Casagrande failed to stop a second spot-kick in the 37th minute and Guingamp went 2-1 up just before half-time when Gravelaine made amends for his penalty miss. Stephane Carnot got his second of the match and Guingamp's third.

Lens saw their hopes of a title challenge dashed in Corsica. They went down 3-2 to Bastia in a match which degenerated into a free-for-all at the end.



Chicago Bulls guard Michael Jordan (centre) makes his first public appearance at a practice session for the NBA's All-Star Weekend in downtown San Antonio, Texas. New York Knicks centre Patrick Ewing (left) and Charlotte Hornets forward Glen Rice watch Jordan take a pass (Reuters photo)



Orlando Magic seven foot one inch tall centre Shaquille O'Neal (right) receives some advice from former USSR Olympic basketball coach Alexander Golmesky following the NBA's All-Star practice session in San Antonio (Reuters photo)

Scotland's Colin McRae is shown in action during the 14th lap in his Subaru during the world championship-opening Swedish Rally in Karlstad (Reuters photo)

Makinen wins hard fought Swedish Rally

KARLSRAD, Sweden (R) — Finn Tommi Makinen hung on superbly to clinch victory in a drama-filled finish to the World Championshi-opening Swedish Rally on Sunday.

Makinen led almost throughout, keeping his Mitsubishi just ahead of Carlos Sainz' Ford, even though he had to plough tracks for his rivals through fresh snow.

Sainz produced one of the drives of the rally, harrying Makinen on stages he had never driven at competitive speeds. He closed the gap to 12 seconds and looked well-placed to snatch the lead but a broken shock absorber on the last stage forced him to settle for second.

World champion Colin McRae of Britain was third, recovering strongly from tyre problems and a minor accident at the start of the rally.

"It could have been better," McRae said. "If the tyres had been all right we could have won. It's a bit frustrating, but at least we got some points."

Finn Juha Kankkunen had to settle for fourth with his Toyota no match for McRae's Subaru in the snow.

Former world champion Ari Vatanen escaped unhurt when he crashed his Ford at almost 200 kph when battling Swede Kenneth Erikkson for fifth place.

The next round of the World Championship is Kenya's Safari Rally in April.

Mutola breaks 18-year-old record

BIRMINGHAM (R) — Maria Mutola of Mozambique set a women's 1,000 metres indoor world record at an athletics meeting on Saturday.

Mutola won in a time of two minutes 32.08 seconds to break the previous record of 2:34.8 set by German Brigitte Kraus in Dortmund in 1978.

Old 400 metres hurdles rivals Sandra Farmer-Patrick of the United States and Britain's Olympic champion Sally Gunnell were both disqualified in their race.

The American rounded on officials, complaining: "It was their mistake for not telling us where the break was."

The pair shared a photo-finish with Jamaicans Deon Hemmings and Juliet Campbell in a rough-house race with Hemmings getting the verdict ahead of her compatriot in a time of 53.16secs.

Gunnell, who began her comeback after a heel injury last weekend, said: "I wanted to give it a real go and it was good to be leading into the final bend."

Tony Jarrett of Britain beat world indoor and outdoor high hurdles champion Allen Johnson of the United States in the 60 meters hurdles in 7.62 seconds.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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CHOICES, CHOICES

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 10 6 2
♡ J 10
◇ A K Q J 7
♣ Q 8 2

WEST
♠ Q 5 4
♡ K Q 4
◇ 5 4 3
♣ 10 7 6 3

EAST
♠ 7 3
♡ A 9 7 5 3 2
◇ 10 6 2
♣ K 5

SOUTH
♠ A K J 9 8
♡ 8 6
◇ 9 8
♣ A J 9 4

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2◇	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: King of ♡

If you can see that, left to his own devices, declarer will make the contract, look for a way that will present declarer with a losing alternative. East found the way on this deal.

Note North's jump to four spades on the second round of the auction. That is the Principle of Fast Arrival which, in modern methods, denotes a minimum for the initial response — a raise to three spades would be stronger, since it leaves room to investigate slam below game level.

West led the king of hearts and continued with the queen. It was obvious to East declarer had the ace of clubs for the opening bid and, with a five diamond tricks waiting to be taken in dummy, the defenders would need a trick in each black suit to defeat the contract. Left alone, declarer would play on trumps, losing a trick if necessary, and then run diamonds.

There was only one hope, and East went for it. At trick two the defender overtook the queen with the ace hearts, then shifted to the five of clubs away from the king. Declarer might well have staked everything on one of two black-suit finesses but, convinced that the king of clubs was in the West hand, chose an alternative line.

South rose with the ace of clubs and banged down the ace and king of spades. When the queen did not drop, declarer started to run the diamonds. All would have been well had the defender with the queen of trumps also held four diamonds. But West was able to ruff the fourth diamond as declarer took only two club pitches, and the king of clubs was the setting trick.

TODAY AT

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Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:45, 8:30, 10:30

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On Deadly Ground
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* Jim Carrie
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Knicks, Spurs make four-player deal

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Knicks got rid of two long-term contracts, one belonging to the fans' least-favourite player, the other belonging to a seldom-used second-year veteran.

In return, they got two role players, their third first-round pick in next summer's American National Basketball Association draft and — most importantly — millions of dollars worth of room to manoeuvre in the league's first blockbuster unrestricted free-agent market.

Such was the upshot of the trade that sent forwards Charles Smith and Monty Williams to the San Antonio Spurs for Brad Lohaus, J.R. Reid and a first-round draft pick.

Both teams are doing well in their conference races, the Knicks having the fourth-best record in the east, the Spurs having the second-best mark in the west. But both also addressed their needs for this season and beyond.

The Spurs will use Smith at power forward, hoping he can replace some of the rebounding and defence that they traded away when Dennis Rodman was dealt to the Chicago Bulls.

"He is a proven veteran who can both score and defend, and brings a great deal of experience and leadership to our team," General Manager Gregg Popovich said. "Our front line of David Robinson, Charles Smith and Sean Elliott is going to be among the best in the NBA."

The Knicks will use Lohaus as a legitimate 3-point threat and will let Reid move into Smith's role as a backup forward. By getting rid of two long-term contracts, New York also will have a shot at quickly rebuilding its aging team.

"Now we have three first-round picks, and it also was important to free some salary cap room for the summer," General Manager Ernie Grunfeld said. "The players we got in return will allow us to stay at a very high competitive level. We'll still be competitive in the playoffs. Reid can help us fill some of the void, and our younger players will get an opportunity to play more."

Smith has three years left on a six-year $21 million contract and Williams has two years remaining on a $3 million deal. Reid's contract expires at the end of the season and Lohaus has one year left at $550,000.

When this season ends, the Knicks will be between $7.5 and $8 million under the salary cap and can use the money to lure one or more high-profile unrestricted free agents next summer. Among those available will be Reggie Miller, Tim Hardaway, Juwan Howard and Kenny Anderson.

Asprilla keeps Newcastle on course

Newcastle United's new Colombian signing Faustino Asprilla falls to the ground after being tackled by Middlesbrough defenders during their Premiership match (Reuters photo)

LONDON (AFP) — A dramatic debut by Faustino Asprilla, just three hours after the Colombian flew in from Italy, inspired Premiership leaders Newcastle to a 2-1 win over Middlesbrough on Saturday.

Newcastle, aiming for their first title in 69 years, preserved their nine-point lead after record 6.7 million pound (11 million dollar) signing Asprilla instigated a stirring fightback.

The 26-year-old Columbian had been expected to watch Newcastle's game from the main stand of Middlesbrough's lavish new Riverside Stadium.

But manager Keegan surprisingly named the striker as a substitute, introducing him to the rough-and-tumble of the Premiership with 23 minutes to go and with his side trailing to a first half own goal.

Keegan's side were facing only their fourth league defeat of the season after John Beresford turned Brasilian star Juninho's 37th minute cross into his own net.

But within seven minutes of coming on, a piece of dazzling skill on the left flank by Asprilla provided the opportunity for Steve Watson to head Newcastle level.

England striker Les Ferdinand, capitalising on a terrible error by goalkeeper Gary Walsh 12 minutes from time, condemned Bryan Robson's Boro to their seventh consecutive league defeat.

Asprilla, who donned Newcastle's famous black and white stripes shortly after flying in from Milan, admitted he had not expected to be given the chance to make such a spectacular introduction.

"When the club hadn't got the work permit yesterday I didn't think I'd be able to play for a while," said Asprilla, who was only denied a debut goal by a fine Gary Walsh save.

He added: "I am just so happy that it's gone so well for me. As soon as I went out there, with the fans shooting for me I felt comfortable and I know I am going to enjoy playing for Newcastle."

Keegan, who admitted his side were well below their best, praised the man he has spent weeks trying to sign.

He said: "He is a naturally fit lad even though he has barely played in the last two and a half months but he just sparked us off.

"Before the game I told him we'd send him on if we were two up. I didn't think he had to go on when we were a goal down but he did fantastically well and showed just what a great player can do," he added.

Second-placed Manchester United completed the double over champions Blackburn iwth a 1-0 victory at Old Trafford, former England Winger Lee Sharpe grabbing his first goal since September in the 14th minute.

United manager Alex Ferguson swallowed his disappointment after hearing news of the Newcastle result which kept the gap between the two remaining nine points with 12 game remaining.

Ferguson said: "I thought it was going to be a good day when I heard the half-time score up at Middlesbrough. But we can only keep on doing what we're doing.

"Newcastle have got some tough away games to come and obviously we hope they drop points in those games. That's the key to it all for us."

Aston Villa maintained their bid for a UEFA Cup spot with Trinidadian Dwight Yorke, who scored twice in last weekend's 3-0 win over Leeds, again grabbing a double to condemn bottom club Bolton to a 2-0 home defeat.

IBM computer beats Kasparov

PHILADELPHIA (R) — An IBM computer called Deep Blue made chess history on Saturday by comfortably beating world champion Garry Kasparov, marking a machine's first victory under classic tournament rules.

Deep blue, playing with the advantage of the white pieces, forced the Russian grandmaster to resign on the 37th move in the first game of a six-game match after surrounding his King with pieces and winning material in a relentless attack.

With five games left from Sunday until next Saturday, grandmasters believe the game would also be significant to the outcome of the contest, which is worth $400,000 to the winner and $100,000 to the loser.

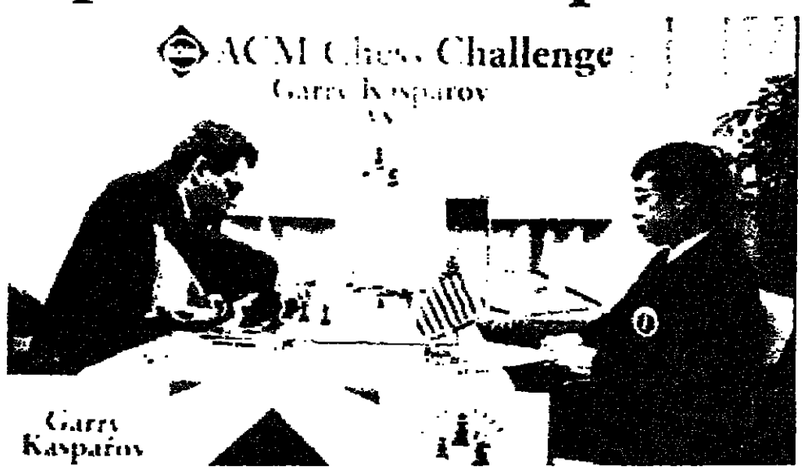
Although computer programmes have beaten grandmasters including Kasparov in games lasting five, 30 or 60 minutes, this was the first win for a machine in a classical chess format. Each player had two hours in which to make 40 moves, two hours to complete the next 20 and then an hour to end the game.

Saturday's game was over in three hours, Deep Blue having used one hour and 10 minutes and Kasparov one hour and 55 minutes.

"Deep Blue had no fear," said grandmaster Joel Benjamin, who worked with the IBM team of programmers in its final preparation. "If it does not see a winning attack for its opponent it just presses on. It saw everything and it was right."

The computer programme selected an opening of the Sicilian defence known to chess experts as the "C3 Sicilian." It had become popular in the last 10 years as a way to avoid the sharpest attacking options of the black pieces.

Kasparov, 32, sitting on a raised platform opposite a video display terminal and an IBM programmer receiving the moves over the internet computer network from Yorktown heights, New York, was in trouble as early as the 13th move when the computer thrust a knight at his queen.



World chess champion Garry Kasparov matches his genius against the IBM's Deep Blue, the ACM International Computer Chess Champion, for $500,000 in prize money (Reuters photo)

Holding his head in his hands and grimacing over the chessboard, Kasparov spent a valuable 30 minutes in deep thought before making his reply. By the middlegame, Kasparov's pawn structure was in disarray. As Deep Blue marshalled its pieces to attack, the wrold champion's counterattack folded.

"Kasparov decided to go on to the attack because in his judgement it was a forced win," said grandmaster Yasser Seirawan, who led the commentary in a separate room for more than 200 spectators. "He overlooked a very critical defensive move that would have given him an advantage."

Seirawan, who predicted a resounding victory for Kasparov before the match started, said he was now seriously rethinking that view.

The IBM programmers, who spent six years developing deep blue, were jubilant. Kaspasrov left the Philadelphia convention centre without speaking to reporters, but associates said he was very disappointed and took the defeat to heart.

In a control room, programmers cheered, clapped and hugged each other when Kasparov resigned.

"It's great, I think its going to be a very interesting match now," said C.J. Tan, senior manager of the company's parallel processing unit. Parallel processors work on different parts of a complex problem simultaneously, as opposed to less powerful and older serial processors, which solve them one at a time.

The researchers, only one of whom is a serious chess player, have worked since 1988 developing a processor chip specifically for chess calculations.

Deep Blue is now a 32-node IBM RS/6000 SP high/performance computer capable of calculating 50 billion moves within three minutes.

The machine's name is a play on IBM's nickname, Big Blue.

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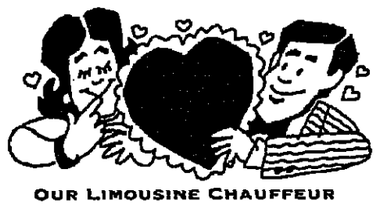

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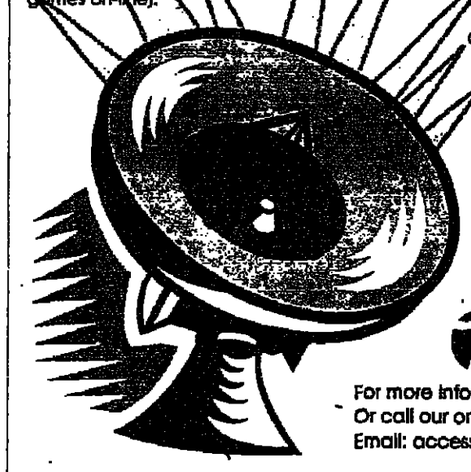

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Irish PM criticises Major as peace search crumbles

LONDON (R) — Irish Premier John Bruton slammed British Prime Minister John Major's handling of the Northern Irish peace process on Sunday as both governments grappled with the political fall-out from a huge IRA bomb attack in London.

Shattering any hopes of unity between Dublin and London in the wake of the blast, which signalled the end of the Irish Republican Army's 17-month ceasefire, Mr. Bruton warned Mr. Major to drop his plan for elections to break the peace deadlock.

"I believe the idea of having an election of the kind suggested immediately after the resumption of violence would pour petrol on the flames. I think it would be a serious mistake," he told a BBC television interviewer.

Mr. Major's office declined to comment on the remarks, which looked set to create a rift between London and Dublin as the two governments grappled for a way forward after the bomb killed two and wounded more than 100 in the Eastern Docklands area.

But Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, rebuffed a conciliatory offer by Mr. Bruton to resume the peace process exactly where it had been before the bomb went off if the IRA could be persuaded to reinstate its ceasefire.

In a grim assessment of the situation, Sinn Fein Chairman Mitchell McLaughlin said the peace process had now collapsed.

"We are prepared to play our full role... in convincing people who resort to armed struggle that there is an efficient and an effective alternative...But we cannot do it on our own," Mr. McLaughlin told BBC television.

"Unfortunately, because over an 18-month period the British government didn't join the process themselves and made no attempts to bring the unionists on board, the peace process which was constructed over many years...has collapsed.

"Now we have to back to the drawing board and we have to start to rebuild it yet again," Mr. McLaughlin said.

One hopeful sign on Sunday came from a leading loyalist close to the IRA's Protestant guerrilla foes who said that he did not expect any immediate retaliation for the London blast.

"I am convinced that for the foreseeable future (loyalist groups)...will...maintain the ceasefire, at least for the time being," said David Ervine of the hardline Progressive Unionist Party, pledged to maintaining British rule in Northern Ireland.

A spokeswoman for the London Docklands Development Corporation said damage from the bomb would cost between £50 million ($77 million) and £100 million ($155 million).

U.S. President Bill Clinton led a chorus of condemnation of the devastating blast from governments around the world.

But some foreign newspapers, including the New York Times, accusing Mr. Major of playing a dangerous game of brinkmanship by insisting the IRA hand over some of its weapons before all-party peace talks could begin.

Mr. Bruton echoed their sharp criticism.

"I make no moral equivalence between acts of violence which are on a profoundly different plane to mistakes that might be made by politicians... (but) I believe (Major's) open and shut presentation in the House of Commons of the matter earlier this month was a mistake," he said.

The Irish premier's remarks were clearly directed at reinstating a joint November commitment by the two governments to hold all-party negotiations by the month's end.

Mr. Major sidestepped the pledge last month when he said the IRA's refusal to disarm barred Sinn Fein from all-party talks and announced elections instead as a precursor to negotiations.

But the pressure is now building on major.

As police swiftly put extra security in place around London's financial district, British newspapers said security services feared Friday's bomb could be the start of a new wave of attacks in mainland Britain.

PRINCE HASSAN VISITS AIR FORCE: **His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday visits the Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) headquarters where he was received by the Royal Air Force commander and senior officers. Prince Hassan met for a while with the RJAF commander. The Regent also met with a visiting U.S. military delegation, headed by assistant secretary of the U.S. Airforce for International Affairs. Prince Hassan reviewed with the delegation members the situations in the region and scopes of bilateral cooperation, in addition to issues of common concern. Also Sunday Prince Hassan attended an iftar banquet hosted by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Abdul Hafez Mirai Al Kaabneh in honour of senior army officers. Prince Hassan and the audience performed Al Maghreb prayer. The Regent conveyed to the army officers the greetings of His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Jordanian Armed Forces, and praised their unique role in carrying out their duties. The Crown Prince stressed the need for reconsidering priorities with a view to achieving the balance in the management of natural resources and building a model homeland enjoying prosperity, stability and security. The iftar banquet was attended by Chief of Staff for Land forces, and his assistants, the armed forces inspector general and commander of the Royal Jordanian Air Force (Petra photo)**

COLUMN

Dozens injured in stampede after fire extinguisher blast

SEOUL (AFP) — Some 30 people were hospitalised Sunday after an exploding fire extinguisher at a Seoul horse racing track triggered a panicked stampede for the exits, television said. The safety pin of a fire extinguisher was pulled and the sound of exploding gas sent hundreds of the 10,000 punters at the Kwachon Horse Racing Track in southern Seoul rushing out of the stands, Yonhap Television News (YTN) said. It was not clear yet whether any malicious intent was involved, but YTN said a spectator might have accidentally pulled the pin. Some 100 people were injured in the stampede, but no deaths were reported, it said. The injured were carried to nearby hospitals, some with broken legs after apparently leaping from the high stands. Thirty were admitted with serious injuries and the others allowed to return home after treatment, YTN said.

Hong Kong smashes pirated CD storage centre

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong has smashed a pirated compact disc storage centre with the seizure of over 13,000 discs including those on popular movies and updated computer software, the government said Sunday. In the Saturday operation, local customs officers arrested five Chinese males aged 15 to 23, believed to be members of a syndicate supplying counterfeit CDs for sale at Golden Shopping Arcade, the territory's largest and most notorious computer software piracy centre. A government statement said the infringing discs, worth Hong Kong dollars 930,000 ($119,230), included 5,243 videos, 992 games, 7,110 CD-ROMs and 20 items deemed obscene. Among them were popular movies such as Show Girls, Apollo 13, and Dr. Jekyll And Ms Hyde, and updated computer softwares such as the latest version of Chinese Windows 95. They were seized in a domestic flat in the same building as the Golden Shopping Arcade in the seedy Shamshuipo district of Hong Kong. The five males were allowed bail between Hong Kong dollars 10,000 and 100,000 ($1,282-12,821) pending further investigation, the government said.

Malaysia steps up hunt for 125 addicts

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian police Sunday stepped up their manhunt for 125 inmates who escaped following a riot at a drug rehabilitation centre in Kulim, northern Kedah state late Saturday. A platoon of the police field force and anti-riot federal reserve unit troops have been deployed to assist the 150 policemen in the manhunt. Roadblocks were set up over a 10-kilometre radius of the centre. An official at the Federal Police Department in Kuala Lumpur told AFP that 128 inmates escaped Saturday night but three were arrested later. The riot occurred after a group of addicts quarrelled with the centre's officials at 6.30 p.m. local time Saturday. Kulim District Police Chief Mohamad Badri Omar was quoted as saying in news reports Sunday. This was the first massive breakout by inmates from such a centre. In previous smaller-scale escapes, addicts have often alleged maltreatment and overcrowding. Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayob said Friday there were 200,000 drug addicts in Malaysia.

Iran pledges to stay on course as it marks revolution

TEHRAN (R) — Iranians took to the streets on Sunday to celebrate the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution against the Shah and re-affirm allegiance to the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's strict guidelines.

Tens of thousands marched from five points in Tehran to rally at the city's Azadi (freedom) Square, waving flags and bearing portraits of Khomeini and his successor, spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. About 100,000 thronged in the square and official media said millions attended similar rallies throughout the country. Witnesses said security appeared tighter than in previous years.

Visiting American black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, main foreign guest at the Tehran rally, hailed the revolution and said: "Iran is now in the vanguard of an Islamic revolution that is sweeping the earth.

"You must not despair because it appears that enemies are all around this marvellous revolution. You must not get weak or weary in your vanguard position," the self-styled leader of the Nation of Islam said.

Mr. Farrakhan, who arrived in Tehran on Saturday, described himself as "your Muslim brother from the United States of America". His speech in English was broadcast on Tehran radio and a Persian translation was relayed over loudspeakers to people in the streets.

Holding a copy of the Koran, Mr. Farrakhan ended his 35-minute speech by chanting Allahu Akbar (God is greatest), a refrain picked up by the crowd who also chanted: "To the anguish of America, our movement has spread across the world".

As President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani arrived, Mr. Farrakhan left the stage, walked to the Iranian leader's car and embraced him.

Mr. Rafsanjani said Muslims worldwide supported the Iranian revolution and added: "Today you witnessed one from a country known for its enmity against Islam."

Calling Mr. Farrakhan "a speaker for more than 30 million oppressed black Americans", Mr. Rafsanjani said, "Everybody understands that our confrontation is with the government and not the people of America.

"It is the justice-seeking message of Islam that attracts people everywhere. We do not care if that is called exporting revolution."

Mr. Rafsanjani said the Iranian people still regarded the United States as "the great Satan", and said: "As long as America, by adopting unreasonable and blatantly disgraceful policies..., (is) not showing the least sign of goodwill...The Iranian people will continue chanting 'death to America'."

The crowd pledged continued allegiance to the revolution by approving a 10-point resolution read at the end of the rally.

It re-affirmed that Khomeini was the architect of the revolution and his guidelines would always be followed. It also confirmed obedience to Khamenei as a religious duty.

The resolution also praised Mr. Rafsanjani and expressed support for the government's development projects.

U.S. mediator arrives in Belgrade in an effort to salvage faltering Bosnia peace

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The U.S. mediator, Richard Holbrooke, went to Belgrade Sunday after talks in Sarajevo in continuing efforts to defuse a row over the detention of two Bosnian Serbs suspected of war crimes.

The U.S. assistant secretary of state sounded an optimistic note as he left Sarajevo late Sunday, saying as he departed: "I think this is going to get straightened out."

Two senior Bosnian Serb officers are currently held by the Bosnian government after being arrested last month in the Sarajevo area. The international war crimes tribunal asked the government to hold onto the pair pending enquiries into possible war crimes charges. A further two soldiers are also being held for investigation.

Their detention prompted the Serbs to break off contact with the government and withdraw cooperation with NATO. Officials of the 60,000-strong International Peace Force (IFOR) in Bosnia reported the Serbs have withdrawn cooperation in some areas of the country.

During his stay in the capital, Mr. Holbrooke met with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and other government officials. The focus of the talks, a government spokesman said, was freedom of movement for civilians and the right to pursue suspected war criminals.

The effect of the arrests has been to heighten mutual suspicion between the wartime foes and stymie progress towards freeing up movement of civilans across enemy territory.

"It was a good meeting. We talked about a procedure whereby we can get both elements respected; to pursue war criminals but also maintain freedom of movement," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mirza Hajric said. These are two key aspects of the Dayton accords, put together last November in Dayton, Ohio and signed in Paris in December.

While some Western officials have expressed doubts at the timing of the arrests, Mr. Hajric said the government had come under no pressure to release the two senior officers. However, if the two men were of no further interest to the tribunal, the pair would be released, the official added. Mr. Holbrooke "fully supported it (the detentions pending investigation). There was not one bit of pressure for them to be released," the spokesman said. The U.S. official himself declined to comment on the arrests other than to say he had returned to Bosnia to stress "full compliance" with Dayton.

John Shattuck, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for human rights, travelling with Mr. Holbrooke visited two of the Serb prisoners, General Djordje Djukic, and Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic, in prison. They were both in "good health" Mr. Holbrooke told reporters as he left Sarajevo. Ejup Ganic, a senior member of the Bosnian presidency who attended the talks with the American delegation, added that Mr. Holbrooke would raise the question of some 700 Bosnian civilians held in Serbia when he goes to Belgrade.

The group are from the fallen enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, overrun by Bosnian Serb forces last summer. They fled the eastern Bosnia U.N. safe areas for nearby Serbia avoiding the fate of thousands of others from the enclave now missing and presumed dead.

Despite threats to break off relations with IFOR by hardline Serb generals, the Bosnian Serb political leadership have hinted that they did not want to break off relations with NATO. Quoted by SRNA, the official news agency of the rebel Serbs, their leader Radovan Karadzic said that the Serb leadership "is conscious that the full realisation of the peace accord is of great importance for the citizens of the (Bosnian) Serb republic and the (Bosnian) federation."

Israel, U.S. plan new Arrow missile tests

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel and the U.S. plan a new round of tests for the jointly funded Arrow anti-missile missile, an official said Sunday.

David Ivri, director-general of Israel's defence ministry, said a test would be carried out in the next few days to examine the Arrow 2's technical capability and another test would be conducted later to intercept a missile. Mr. Ivri predicted Israel would have "some capability" within a year's time to use the missile system in its defence.

Earlier this month, the United States committed $200 million over five years to develop the Arrow 2. Israel has committed $60 million a year to the project.

Mr. Ivri denied that Israel had any plans to export the Arrow or related technology, saying that it was sharing all information with the United States. "Our goal is to get the maximum capability to defend the country," he said.

Mr. Ivri also referred to the new Nautilus project with the U.S. in which the two countries have developed a laser weapon capable of downing short-range rockets.

On Friday, scientists at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico used the system to shoot down an armed, short-range rocket for the first time. Mr. Ivri said that after one more test, the project would enter phase two in which a prototype would be built.

Militias resume anti-Rabbani talks

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Afghan militia leaders got back to work Sunday at plotting a way to oust President Burhanuddin Rabbani, but a key armed group in the war-wrecked country was still notably absent.

Talks between the four-strong opposition coalition got into their fifth day here, with former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar joining the discussions.

A spokesman for Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami faction said the militia leader arrived Saturday.

But notably absent was the Taliban Islamic militia, which controls large parts of the south and west of Afghanistan and it at present laying siege to Kabul, which is still held by Mr. Rabbani's forces.

"We are trying to meet the Taliban leaders," a spokesman for militia leader General Abdul Rashid Dostam told AFP, as the opposition coalition went into session Sunday in Islamabad.

Mr. Dostam's National Islamic Movement (NIM) militia dominated by ethnic Uzbeks, controls much of northern Afghanistan. Mr. Dostam flew in last Tuesday.

"We call upon all leaders involved in the Afghan conflict to participate in these important discussions," said Mr. Dostam's spokesman General Painda Khan, adding that Mr. Dostam has come with an "important mission."

Two other factions are taking part — Shiite faction Hezb-i-Wahdat of Karim Khalili and the National Liberation Front led by Sibghatullah Mojaddedi.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Borujedri arrived here Wednesday following talks with government officials in Kabul.

Islamic party demands power, warns of new elections in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — New elections are inevitable if Turkey's pro-Islamic Welfare Party is barred from taking power, the party's deputy chairman said Sunday.

"If the Welfare cannot have a leading role in a coalition government, the result will inevitably be fresh general elections," Aydin Menderes said at a party meeting in the southern city of Kahramanmaras, the Anatolia news agency reported.

The Welfare Party became the biggest political group with 158 deputies in the 550-seat parliament in the Dec. 24 election, but party leader Necmettin Erbakan failed to form a coalition government.

Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the Motherland Party, was asked to form a government Feb. 3 after caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path Party, also gave up the attempt.

"Either the Motherland Party agrees to a government led by us, or there will be early elections. Other options like the one between Yilmaz and Ciller are doomed to fail," Mr. Menderes said.

Mr. Yilmaz refused an alliance with arch-rival Ciller as prime minister.

Mr. Yilmaz, the only leader who has not ruled out a coalition with the Islamists, is expected to meet Mr. Erbakan on Monday, but one leading Motherland official said Saturday his party was not hopeful of an accord between the two.

"We have serious differences, particularly after hearing radical remarks by Erbakan," Motherland's Deputy Chairman Avni Akyol said.

According to Turkish press reports, Mr. Erbakan told Iranian diplomats in Ankara last week he admired the Islamic revolution in Iran, and wished for Islamist rule in Turkey.

President Suleyman Demirel has the right to dissolve the national assembly and call early elections if no government is formed within 45 days of the naming of the parliament speaker's office. This happened on Tuesday.

PLO, Israel in row over Palestinian airport site

GAZA (R) — A Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official on Sunday accused Israel of trying to impose security control over a Palestinian airport under construction along the Gaza Strip's border with Israel.

"Israeli soldiers have for the past 10 days tried to prevent work on construction of the airport...and this is a flagrant violation of the accord we signed with them," said Brigadier General Fayez Zeidan, head of the Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority.

The Israeli army had no immediate comment on the allegation.

Gen. Zeidan told Reuters that Israel was trying "to impose security control on the airport before it is operational" at Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

He said Israeli soldiers had entered a third of the airport's area contending it was situated in Zone B, territory where Israel maintains responsibility for overall security under its self-rule deals with the PLO.

The Israeli army, Gen. Zeidan said, contended that "we did not coordinate with them on building in that area". But he said the PLO had submitted its construction maps to the Israeli side more than 45 days ago.

"We insist on going ahead with our plans as agreed previously with Israel so we can conclude construction of the airport and airfield on time in May," Gen. Zeidan said.

"Our agreement with Israelis in Cairo and Taba stated that Palestinians would construct an airport and for eight months we were studying possible locations because they rejected all our proposals since they do not want us to use Israeli skies," he said.

"We finally agreed on the location, area, borders of the airport so we would use Palestinian and Egyptian skies in landing and take-off," Gen. Zeidan said.

Khaled Salem, an economics adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, proposed that Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres meet to resolve the dispute.

"It could be solved in 10 minutes if Israel showed goodwill," he told Reuters. "Israel does not have the right to determine the locations of Palestinian institutions according to its security vision."